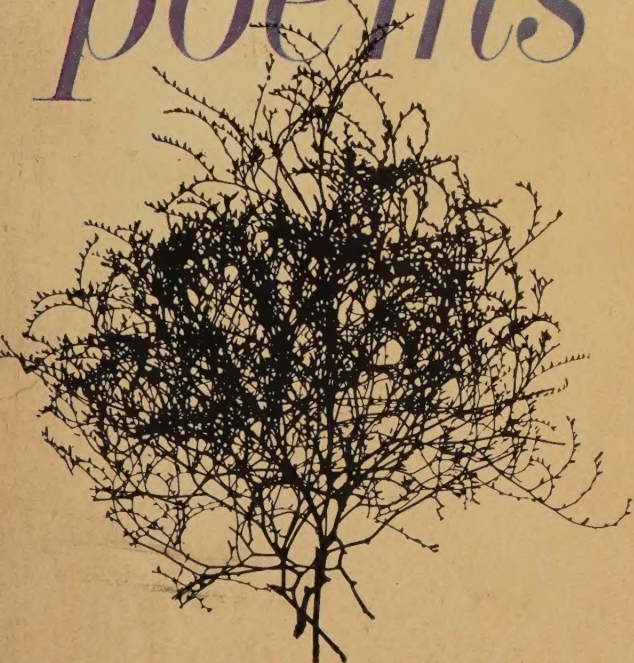


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# INTRODUCTION

## *I. Reputation and Reappraisal*

Poetry, the only high art in America that has flourished continuously in an atmosphere hostile to uncommercial creative activity, reflects the paradox of its survival. The first major poetry to spring from the shoot of a great tradition, it bears the scars of its persistent effort to free itself from paternal resemblance. In its capacity to assume as many shapes as the landscape with which it unfolded, it drew upon the native spokesmen of chain gangs, revival meetings and gin mills, at the same time going as far afield as the Hebrew and Hindu prophets. It cropped out not only in metres recognizable and uncouth, but in such unwieldy disguises as a naturalist's diary, the overcharged "novels" of whaler and mountaineer, and in our own time the article for a businessman's magazine that exploded into a 500-page book. The only poetry in history which had taken as its major theme the idea of democracy—that conviction of the innate worth of every man which inspired individual great poets in all ages—it had to struggle against the same nationalism, practical materialism and standardized taste that have sapped the vitality of democracy in other spheres.

Today, however, as often in the past, American poetry has avoided this conflict by retreating to the maternal shade of a formal garden. Anglican hedge, neo-classical statuary, and some rather overgrown metaphysical weeds obscure the view and paralyze the primary emotions. The poets on location are preoccupied with their own sensibility. If they are to emerge, American poetry must be considered again as a living organism. The tired ghost, that has been mistaken abroad for the body, must be exorcized. And that body must be revalued in terms of the lost voice, thrilling and immortal, which prophesied the time:

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that carved  
the supporting desk . . .  
When a university course convinces as a slumbering woman and  
child convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-watchman's  
daughter . . .

The voice by which up to now American poetry has been represented abroad has been, for the most part, neither

thrilling nor immortal. It has been familiar—in the sense that an old coat is familiar—and cherished for the same reasons: for its recognizable shabbiness, its undistinguished charm, its easily supportable mediocrity.

**OPINIONS ABROAD** At a time of lately victorious comradeship in arms, and one in which the most influential American poet resides in England while England's outstanding contemporary poet has become an American citizen, it may be thought anachronistic to talk in terms of the rivalry of the English-speaking muses. Yet the inferior reputation of American poetry both at home and abroad, for which pedantic arbiters of taste in both countries have been to blame, continues. The indignant sense of national inferiority that expressed itself as far back as the time of the American Revolution in Philip Freneau's

Can we never be thought  
To have learning or grace  
Unless it be brought  
From that damnable place?

—has abated here in respect to almost every commodity but poetry.

How to repair the damage? Standards of purely aesthetic character would rule out at once that very clash of private and public styles which has given American poetry its special vitality. To fasten upon the famous or favorite pieces that have, by their inordinate celebrity, given our poetry its undeserved reputation for derivative grace, would only swell the error. Freneau's "The Wild Honey Suckle," Bryant's "Thanatopsis," and Emerson's "The Rhodora" are good poems in the Wordsworthian tradition; Wordsworth wrote better. Longfellow's "My Lost Youth," Whittier's "The Barefoot Boy," Poe's "The Raven" and Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" are inferior and unrepresentative poems by any discriminating standard. Robinson's "The Man Against the Sky," Amy Lowell's "Patterns," and Pound's "Ballad of the Goodly Fere," were bloodless before the anthologists quoted them to death.

Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language* was the first general English anthology. It appeared in 1861 and included no American poems. Its almost equally popular and influential successor, *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, edited by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, was published in 1900. Among its 883 poems were four by Emerson, three by Poe, two by

Whitman, and one each by Longfellow, Whittier, William Dean Howells, Bret Harte, Bliss Carman and John Boyle O'Reilly. There were, to pick two names at random, eight poems each by Thomas Hood and W. S. Blunt. When Professor Quiller-Couch revised his anthology thirty-nine years later with the addition of eighty-three new poems, he revised slightly his American contingent; he found room for Bryant's "Thanatopsis," three additional poems by Longfellow on English or Italian themes, and a single quotable lyric by Emily Dickinson.

If Oxford intended to make graceful amends for this partiality when it commissioned its first anthology of exclusively American poetry in 1927, it could hardly have chosen as editor a poet of more neo-Anglican tastes than Bliss Carman. Carman selected seventeen poems by Longfellow to sixteen by Emerson; ten by Thomas Bailey Aldrich to nine by Whitman; nothing at all from Melville, Cummings, or Eliot. Of his contemporaries, Carman vouchsafed a poem apiece to Sandburg and Pound, as against four to Odell Shepard, five to Dana Burnet and eight to Louise Imogen Guiney.

But at the hands of American publishers, American poetry fared hardly better. Professor Lounsbury, in his widely circulated *Yale Book of American Verse* (1912), conceded to Whitman only the perennial "O Captain! My Captain!" and to Dickinson, Melville and Thoreau nothing; but he found space for seventeen poems by Oliver Wendell Holmes, sixteen by Longfellow, fourteen by Bryant, twelve each by Whittier and James Russell Lowell—and no less than ten by H. C. Bunner. By comparison, Edmund Clarence Stedman's *An American Anthology* (1900) and Louis Untermeyer's *American Poetry from the Beginning to Whitman* (1931) were pioneer works.

Today a thorough reappraisal of American poetry is in order. It is not enough to merely carry a step further the revolution in taste accomplished piecemeal by Untermeyer, the herald of the Chicago "renaissance" of 1912, or by Conrad Aiken, the prophet of the "metaphysical" revival that followed it. In terms of 1948 both movements are as dated as Emerson's "Transcendentalism."



## II. *The Forerunners*

The struggle between the mystic and the practical man, the soul and society, the artist and the prophet that was to enliven American poetry down to the present day, began even before the eighteenth century. The seventeenth century Puritan poet, Anne Bradstreet, whose *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, or *Several Poems* was published in London in 1650, gravitated between pedantic, humorless couplets in the style of Du Bartas and the Euphuists—

The windy Cholick oft my bowels rend,  
To break the darksome prison where it's pen'd.  
The Cramp and Gout doth sadly torture me,  
And the restraining, lame Sciatica.

—and some rather delightful, unpretentious verses about her love for her husband, in which vein she reveals herself the true ancestor of a long line of family-ridden American women:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue  
Who says my hand a needle better fits . . .

Her younger contemporaries, Benjamin Thompson and Edward Taylor, have little in common with Anne Bradstreet's contemplative piety. Thompson, the first native-born American poet, was a schoolmaster and physician, and a characteristically American note drives through his outwardly conventional epitaph on his father:

Judicious zeal! New England's Boanerges  
Lies tombless: not to spare the church's charges  
But that the world may know he lacks no tomb  
Who in ten-thousand hearts commanded room.  
While thus the thundering textman hidden lies,  
Some virgins slumber; others wantonize.

A Westfield, Connecticut, minister whose manuscript poems in the Yale Library were not discovered until 1937, Edward Taylor, towers over any American poet before Emerson, and belongs in the company of the great English "metaphysical" poets, Crashaw, Herbert and Donne. Like Donne, Taylor went to the commonplace and contemporary for the "particulars" of his unearthly analogies, but

his particulars—fulling mills, bowling alleys, jewelry shops, law courts—are drawn from a less aristocratic scene. The like of his thunderous communion with the Almighty will not be heard in American poetry again until the descendant of seven generations of New England Protestants turns Catholic during the Second World War.

**PHILIP FRENEAU** Philip Freneau is the first American poet for whom writing can be truthfully said to have been an end in itself. He was also a deist, who, in contrast to Taylor's puritan faith in a "divine and supernatural light," took sides with the international libertarian movement, and looked to nature for beauty. As a prophet of enlightenment he foreshadows Emerson, and as a naturalist with an eye for the evanescence of things, and for such *American* particulars as pumpkins, black-birds, elms, squirrels and buffaloes—Bryant. Bryant, however, would have shied away from the slashing Jeffersonian partisan and satirist whom Washington called "that rascal Freneau," from the heavy drinker who died in a snowstorm on his way home from the local tavern, from the man who could write:

The landlord, gouged in either eye,  
Here drains his bottle to the dregs,  
Or borrows Susan's pipe, while she  
Prepares the bacon and the eggs.

**BRYANT AND POE** William Cullen Bryant's contemporaries called him "the great tone-imparter," and his tone—it is so subdued we hear it today with difficulty—may indeed have been cultivated as a protest against such raucous contemporaries of Freneau as Francis Hopkinson, the Philadelphia dandy and Jack-of-all-trades, and Joel Barlow, the Yale wit and speculator in land, who died while with Napoleon at Warsaw. One hundred years after the precocious Bryant drafted "Thanatopsis" in 1811, his literary descendants were still trying to "tone-up" American literature, and happily they were waging a losing battle. But in his own time the effort to make taste conform to England (or to a provincial American's idea of England) was for the most part successful, and the greatest poets of the century were to suffer from its blighting impact.

Poe, whose life began fifteen years after Bryant's and tragically closed twenty-nine years before the elder poet's, carried Bryant's healthy intolerance for provincial stand-

ards to the point of sophistication—judging art by its intrinsic merit—and beyond, to the point of absurdity. “The end of art,” he was finally to say, “is pleasure, not truth”; and from this it was but a step to the artificial prescription for writing “The Raven.” We are not surprised to learn that Poe admired Bryant, Thomas Hood and Tennyson excessively—or that he wrote an article to prove that a long poem, and one with extraesthetic intentions, could not be successfully written. Nor should we be surprised that most of Poe’s poems, and almost all the famous ones, are contrived vehicles, of hollow content and mechanical rhythm, whose facility well merited Emerson’s reference to “the jingle man.”

What is much more surprising, and really impossible to explain rationally, is that the genius of Poe was so great that in spite of himself it triumphed now and then over both his aestheticism and the commanding intellect with which he fortified his theories. In these few poems, as in his best tales, romanticism achieved its utmost in the United States, rivalling in suggestiveness Coleridge’s “Christabel” and “Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” But Poe’s work in terms of our own literature remains an exotic curiosity rather than a creative influence.

### III. *The New England Renaissance*

Without either Poe’s morbidity or his genius, James Russell Lowell shared the Baltimore poet’s shrewd, critical temper and his impressionism. “The first duty of the Muse,” he said, “is to be delightful”; and while Lowell adhered to this safe if limited doctrine he managed—as in the jingling “Fable for Critics”—to be shrewd and delightful at the same time. It was only later in life, when he succumbed to the view that “God made poets . . . to keep alive the traditions of the pure, the holy and the beautiful,” that he began to write graceful and boring odes. In his youth, and under the influence of his wife, herself a poet and early Abolitionist, Lowell went through a spell of liberalism, joining at least the fringe of that revolt against complacency that was one of the faces of Boston in its heyday. In middle and old age he became spokesman, editor and diplomat for the city’s other face: the face that sought to emulate in elegant refinement and “good breeding” England.

Longfellow, whom Lowell succeeded in 1853 as Smith Professor of Belles Lettres at Harvard, practiced what Lowell and his friend Holmes, the neo-classic Brahmin wit, preached but were a trifle too sophisticated to indulge in themselves. That is, instead of commenting on people and manners in the brittle style of *The Biglow Papers* and *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, Longfellow wrote the poems and invented the characters to express exactly the daguerreotype of America in the image of England which the critics—and the overwhelming majority of the reading public—wanted. Not that Longfellow was in the faintest sense servile. It was simply his nature to reflect the literary, the picturesque and the kindly; and he did so in a quiet voice that was invariably melodious and occasionally noble.

Like Washington Irving before him, Longfellow brought back from his successive trips to Europe a grab-bag of romantic legends; and in addition a witches' cauldron of German mysticism and Scandinavian metres. Unfortunately they blended poorly with his misguided effort to fashion a gentlemanly native poetry of the Folk. The self-consciously Indian terseness of "Hiawatha" is less memorable than the anonymous parodist's:

He killed the noble Mudjokivis.  
Of the skin he made him mittens,  
Made them with the fur side inside,  
Put the inside skinside outside . . .

It is a temptation to endow Longfellow's more rustic contemporary Whittier with gifts of a superior order merely because the fire of his Abolitionist conscience and the furniture of his humbler lodgings strike a superficially more vigorous and "American" note. The truth is that Whittier compares poorly with his English prototype, Burns, and that as a poet he never surpassed or outgrew the homely descriptive virtues of "Snow-Bound." It is rather to Concord, fifteen miles west of the center of Boston, that one must look for the first truly native incandescence of poetry.

EMERSON'S "To avail ourselves of the literature of  
CONCORD other nations," wrote the elder William  
Ellery Channing, father of the poet who  
was Emerson's friend, "we must place ourselves on a level  
with them . . . A people into whose minds the thoughts of  
foreigners are poured perpetually needs an energy within

itself to resist, to modify this mighty influence." When Channing's disciple, Emerson, delivered at the age of thirty-four his revolutionary Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard, the audience—and America—was divided as if with the stroke of a knife:

Our day of independence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands draws to a close . . . I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia. I embrace the common . . . The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the form and the gait of the body . . .

About Emerson, in the Concord of the '40's and '50's, was assembled such a company of genius, near-genius, and eccentricity as could not be found in history without travelling as far afield as Goethe's Weimar, Shakespeare's London or Leonardo's Florence.

There was Jones Very, the half-mad sonneteer of God, torn between his humility and sense of defilement. There was Hawthorne, bearing the weight of the puritan past on his shoulders, whose studies of the soul of man through sphinx-like symbols eluded even Emerson. There was Bronson Alcott, the progressive-educator who found "children so attractive because they are still under the sway of instinct," and whom Emerson had watched with mingled sympathy and alarm mount a ladder at the incredible "Con-Sociate Family" of nearby Fruitlands, to pour water from a pitcher over women covered with sheets in a shelter of clothes-horses. There was the daemonic Margaret Fuller, who gave Transcendentalism a pioneering house-organ in the monthly *Dial*. There was Agassiz, the great naturalist, with whom Emerson went "primitive" in the Adirondacks (Longfellow refused to accompany them; "Somebody will be shot," he characteristically warned). There was Thoreau.

THOREAU AND WALDEN POND / "I have never met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?" Thus spoke Henry Thoreau, exactly one hundred years ago, when he moved two miles south of Concord to live in a self-made shack in communion with nature at Walden Pond. The land on which this ancestor of Frank Lloyd Wright and Henry Miller retired briefly to play his flute and write his masterpiece cost \$8.08; his food, he tells us, amounted to 27 cents a week. But had



they cost more, Thoreau would simply have moved farther west, for he was concerned with other values.

Explore your own higher latitudes . . . Simplify! Simplify! Our life is frittered away by detail . . . We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us . . . We are now in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate . . . Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads . . . Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.

Fond, as Channing said, of maximizing the minimum, Thoreau was too busy with life and with being a poet to squander much time making a living. Intolerant of any completeness save intensity of living, he had no use for organized religion. When reminded of heaven on his deathbed, he answered: "One world at a time." For organized government he had as little use. "Nations! What are nations? Tartars! and Huns! and Chinamen! Like insects they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of a man that there are so many men." Yet paradoxically the man who went to jail rather than pay a poll tax and with his "Civil Disobedience" gave Gandhi the slogan for a mass-movement was not averse to violence in a good cause and at first welcomed the Civil War. His genius cannot be contained in any consistency.

His poetry, patterned on Greek phrase-making and Hindu thought, owes a little to Aeschylus' "clear eye for the commonest things," a little to George Herbert and Emerson, but most to his own self-contained passion and honesty. "The poem," he said once, "is drawn out from under the feet of the poet, his whole weight has rested on this ground." He lived in the present. He knew, profoundly, that "every poet has trembled on the verge of science." He must have agreed with his great friend that "it is not metres but a metre-making argument that makes a poem." Prophesying that industrial capitalism would mean the end of freedom, he asserted that man could be truly at home only in Nature. "The seasons and all their changes are in me!" he exclaimed in a moment of ecstasy, but also, in a humbler vein:

My life has been the poem I would have writ  
But I could not both live and utter it.

**EMERSON'S POETRY** Whereas "prose" was the natural vehicle for Thoreau's poetry, Emerson's genius expressed itself most easily in verse. The more famous *Essays* are little more than chains of epigrams and

poetic insights held together by a title; the poems are without their sometimes pompous and oracular tone:

To clothe the fiery thought  
In simple words succeeds,  
For still the craft of genius is  
To mask a king in weeds.

From Landor, Emerson learned to prune his line of adjectives and mannerisms, but he mounted then into an atmosphere of possessed yea-saying. The result was a hard, dry, magically precise diction, giving somewhat the effect of Plato's philosophers discoursing with Hebraic assurance around a cracker barrel in the general-store.

In terms of the wholeness of poetry, Emerson never quite achieved the destiny he prophesied. "Our poets," he had lamented, "are content with a civil and conformed manner of living, writing poems from the fancy, at a safe distance from their experience"—and that was exactly the weakness of Emerson himself. Far more than the chaste Thoreau, he was a victim of that very New England frigidity against which he so brilliantly inveighed. He could not quite let himself go. His last journey to England confirmed his faith in American crudeness as an antidote to cynicism, yet so fastidious was he himself that England's "materialism" and "brawn" made him feel like an "invalid."

Emerson's poems preach abandonment to the senses without being themselves abandoned. They celebrate the common touch without revealing a common humanity. Yet their very frailty is moving. The clear spirit if not the body of the man comes through. They ring with the strong, tonic reverberation of the ice at Walden Pond, across which the poet delighted to skip stones of a crisp morning.

**LYRIC EPILOGUE:** Emerson once met his greatest dis-  
**EMILY DICKINSON** ciple, the only contemporary poet,  
English or American, with a lyric  
gift transcending his own, but if he even suspected that she  
wrote verse there is no record of it.

Sailor of the atmosphere;  
Swimmer through the waves of air;  
Voyager of light and noon;  
Epicurean of June;  
Wait, I prithee, till I come  
Within earshot of thy hum,—  
All without is martyrdom.

These lines to the "burly, dozing humble-bee," that "animated torrid-zone," are Emerson's, but the style is pure

Emily Dickinson. How could he have known that there, in the fugitive, elfin person of the Amherst minister's eccentric daughter, New England's puritan tradition, Yankee humor and spiritual unrest had fused for the last time, and at white heat—that all *within* was martyrdom? “Split the lark and you'll find the music,” Emily had said; and it was not until five years after her death in 1886 that the splitting was begun; and the end is not yet.

Why was Emily Dickinson at once so articulate and so reticent? Her biographer, George Whicher, after tracing the course of her two thwarted loves, and her ultimate retirement into the shadows of the big house on Main Street, concludes sanely enough that the second “crisis,” through which she came to see God as Love's Adversary, “enabled her to fulfill the prescript of her generation for utter rectitude of conduct, which for her meant the stifling of hopes . . . and yet to keep the bitter waters from stagnating in her breast, she won a sanity that could make even grief a plaything.”

Loneliness she did not court; it was something to be borne. In her will to make good come from evil she reincarnated Anne Bradstreet. Like the Bryant of “Thanatopsis,” only more piercingly, she found in nature the visible manifestation of God. Like Blake, she sought beauty in minute particulars. Like Thoreau, she valued individuality, and like him she travelled widely in her own native village and found “an ecstasy in living.” Amherst, and in the last years her garden, became the universe.

“If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry.” It is the quality that her own singular blend of passion, wit and energy of mind communicates. Her poetry, at its worst, is whimsical, tripping, arch, self-pitying, obscure: a spinster's coil of alternately rhymed trochaic trimeters, whipped to conclusion with a ponderous abstraction ending in the letter “y.” At its best—and this is not as with most lyric masters in a dozen poems, but in scores—her idiom is condensed, quick as pickerel, as capable of the most personal as well as the most universal, elevating the simplest hymn-metres to rapture, achieving great affirmation even out of platitude.

#### IV. *Climax and Decline*

We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials . . . Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung . . . Bare lists of words are found suggestive to an imaginative and excited mind . . . Milton is too literary, and Homer too literal and historical . . . I look in vain for the poet I describe.

Emerson, who wrote these prophetic words in 1844, had only eleven years to wait for the poet and poem he so exactly characterized. In 1855 Walt Whitman, a Brooklyn newspaperman of New England and Quaker ancestry, who may not have read the prophecy but who had already said, "I was simmering, simmering, simmering—Emerson brought me to a boil," mailed copies of his privately printed *Leaves of Grass* to the sage of Concord and to Whittier. Whittier took one good look and tossed his copy in the fire. Emerson sat down and wrote a famous letter. "I give you joy for your free and brave thoughts," he wrote; "I find the courage of treatment that so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire. I greet you at the beginning of a great career." Years later Emerson's puritanism or his outraged sense of form got the better of him. "I expected him to make the songs of a nation," he opined, "but he seems to be contented to make the inventories." And he included not a line of Whitman in his American anthology. The tragic dualism of American literature had begun.

**WALT WHITMAN'S** As for Whitman, he promptly (and "LEAVES OF GRASS" without permission) slapped the letter on the first of countless new editions of the *Leaves*, and went to work in his own way. "I will not descend among professors and capitalists," he announced truculently; "I will turn the ends of my trousers around my boots and go with drivers and boatmen . . . In other authors of the first class [he was already supremely self-confident] there have been celebrators of low life and characters—holding it up as curious observers—but here is one who enters it with love." The emphasis should be on the word *love*. Like Emerson in his intuitive, unsystematic thought—his egotism (the 1855 volume began, "I celebrate myself . . ."), his heartiness, his self-educated bearishness, his sensuality, his style, shocked his contemporaries be-

yond endurance. Love for mankind, in which no poet, ancient or modern, has surpassed Whitman (Shakespeare *understood* men, which is something else again) was more an attitude than a reality in the 1855 volume. The poet of "Song of Myself" identifies himself electrifyingly with the survivors of a shipwreck he has never witnessed ("I am the man. I suffered. I was there.") but there is nowhere the *depth* of identification and love that came to him after the devastating two years he spent in the Civil War hospital—in *Drum Taps*, in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," in "When Lilacs Late in the Dooryard Bloom'd," in the great muted death-poems of his last years.

The style of *Leaves of Grass* has puzzled generations of critics. Where did it come from? How did he write it? And is it poetry? None of the questions can be answered with finality. Whitman himself, at its birth up to his ears in Free Soil Republicanism and the local small-town journalism of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, averred that "We" wrote the editorials, "I" the letters, and his "Soul" the poems. There were more particular splits in his personality. His dependence on his mother, with her background of Quaker Dutch concern for the individual harassed by hunger and cruelty, must have strongly influenced his revolt against the English-ness of New England. But his voluptuousness is not Quaker. Certainly the frustrations of his relations with women tended to direct the superabundance of his capacity for love, first toward men, and finally toward man.

In so far as there are "sources" for the style of *Leaves*, it is obvious that Whitman was impressed by the rhythms of the Hebrew prophets (King James version), and we know that political oratory, the rhetoric of the theatre, and especially the recitative of Italian opera ("heart music," he called it, "not art music") delighted him. The technical devices by which his loose, dithyrambic style achieves its impact—balancing of long phrases, suspension of meaning to the final word of a paragraph, recurrence, assonance, trochaic in preference to the customary English iambic foot, and what Dr. Canby calls "perpendicular alliteration"—may be spotted. But the ultimate poetry, the cumulative effect of his incantations, can only be felt by the reader who is sympathetic toward, or abandons himself to, Whitman's unique exuberance. Few will deny the flatness, the pretentiousness, the disorganized repetition of large stretches of *Leaves of Grass*. But the "catalogues," as such, cannot be dismissed; they are often relevant parts of the whole. And the magical phrases ("I recline by the sills of



the exquisite flexible doors") are the more dramatic and memorable for their relative infrequency. *Leaves of Grass* is the life-history of a whole man; it was *meant* to be suggestive and growing, not complete and dead.

Whitman, almost single-handed, invented the American language; discovered it, is perhaps more just. He created the poetry of democracy. He was a transcendent optimist, yet his war poems, which tower over any others, are realistic and disillusioned in the extreme, for the very reason that his love for humanity transcended his patriotism. He was the greatest American nationalist, and—for identical reasons!—the first poet of internationalism and "One World." His celebrations of the wonder and mystery of sex got him fired from a government job, and drove Emerson (among others) to urge him to censor the *Leaves*, but they caused D. H. Lawrence more than half a century later to call Whitman "the first to smash the old moral concept that the 'soul' of man is something 'superior' and 'above' the flesh."

**HERMAN MELVILLE** Melville, like Whitman, was too native, too American, to be appreciated in an America that was straining for Anglican gentility; and paradoxically both poets achieved their first reputation in England. *Moby Dick*, the great prose-poem of pessimism, of mankind pitting its puny force against the aimless malevolence of nature, is the counterforce and equal of *Leaves of Grass*. Its failure drove Melville (like Hardy) to poetry in his later years, and like Hardy's his verse is cantankerous, uneven, experimental, and by flashes sublime.

"Herman has taken to writing poetry," Mrs. Melville wrote to her mother in 1859. "You need not tell anyone for you know how such things get around." The remark could easily have been written by an American wife in 1947, and it might be shocking to any other country in the world to realize that it was not until 1947 that Melville's *Collected Poems* were finally published. Melville himself, like his friend Hawthorne, and like E. A. Robinson in our time, had already gone to a clerkship in the Custom House for his livelihood. "What I feel most moved to write," he told Hawthorne, "won't pay. Yet altogether write the *other* way I can't. So the product is a final hash; and all my books are botches."

Of his novels, posterity has already judged otherwise. The poems await final judgment. Their weakness is a cer-

tain amateurishness, a lack of competency in the old metres, and a failure to devise new ones to contain the iron of his irony and deliberate harshness of his diction. When form and content do occasionally mesh as in the battle-and sea-pieces, there is born a giant splendor, surpassing the felicities of lesser poets:

Some heaven invoke; but rings of reefs  
Prayer and despair alike deride  
In dance of breakers forked or peaked,  
Pale maniacs of the maddened tide;  
While, strenuous yet some end to earn,  
The haglets spin, though now no more astern.  
Like shuttles hurrying in the looms  
Aloft through rigging frayed they ply—  
Cross and recross—weave and inweave,  
Then lock the web with clinching cry  
Over the seas on seas that clasp  
The weltering wreck where gurgling ends the gasp.

**CRANE, LANIER AND OTHERS** The period from the Civil War to the turn of the century and beyond, through which some of the giants of the first renaissance lived, is as barren of poetic vitality as any in our history. All the cadences of decline are in its new voices. Edward Sill, precariously balancing in indecision between the conservative and radical forces of the '60's, became a gentle stoic and went to California. Sidney Lanier, a victim of the Civil War, devoted his great courage and feeble health to an absurd theory of the wholly musical values of poetry, which in the end capsized his own verse. "Perhaps you know that with us of the younger generation in the South," he wrote a friend, "since the war pretty much of the whole of life has been merely not dying." William Vaughn Moody's most famous poem, characteristically entitled "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," is full of such poetic props as fiery chalices, potters' shards, dissolved limbs, gleeful children ("spying the arbutus, spring's dear recluse"—!) and "men of noble breed." It is a frightening example of exemplary liberal sentiment clothed to academic perfection in all the cast-off rags and tags of three centuries of (English) poetry.

Without any of the spiritual elevation or patriotism of Moody, Stephen Crane's "War Is Kind" by comparison is like a stick of dynamite. It comes off. It *goes* off. Not a word too much. The clichés here are deliberate, have a point—a devastating point; they crackle. It is from this piece of bitter realism—cynicism, if you will—that the second great

awakening in American poetry will spring. Its open-eyed realism, its staccato rhythms and abandonment of rhyme, its crisp understatement, cleared the way for new vision and fresh cadences.

## V. *The Second Renaissance: Chicago to Paris*

In Moody's "Ode" an effort had been made to convey the untapped vitality for American poetry of the Middle and Far West:

Chicago sitteth at the northwest gates,  
With restless violent hands and casual tongue  
Moulding her mighty fates . . .

Twelve years later, in the poem that ushered in the Chicago "Renaissance," a very different kind of poet addressed the same city:

. . . they tell me that you are brutal, and my reply is: on the  
faces of women and children I have seen the marks of  
wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at  
this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say  
to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud  
to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning . . .

Finessing four decades of "refinement," the voice of Whitman had spoken again.

**SANDBURG** Carl Sandburg had been variously a  
**AND JEFFERS** scene-shifter, dish-washer, truck-hand-  
dler, porter, harvest-hand and soldier before he wrote these lines. He had also, like Whitman, written editorials for newspapers, and his poems have both the virtues and limitations of that typically American genre. Sprawling, or condensed as a telegram, each poem pictures some "angle" of the powerhouse of industrial America: the fog in city streets, a jazzband trying to harmonize moonlight and chaos, the slam-bang and roar of steel-mills, an encounter in a Pullman smoker, the disappearance of a familiar whore from a street corner, "Losers," "Night Stuff," "Caboose Thoughts." "Poetry," Sandburg said, "is the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits." The impact of these early poems, with their contrasts of

brutality and pathos, their welding of folklore and slang, was—and still is—as jolting as an uppercut. There were still a few hooks and jabs left in *The People, Yes* (1936) but the fighter who had resorted to filling out his poems with anecdotes and proverbs looked a little groggy.

Robinson Jeffers, the major poet of California, bears no blood relationship to the Chicago uprising, but he has a kinship—stylewise and symbolic—with Whitman. Both poets admired Ossian, the rhetorical Celtic soothsayer, and Jeffers' surf-like rolling line can be as monotonous and as magnificent as the elder poet's. Symbolically, Jeffers at Carmel, hurling his bolts of pessimism at the Pacific from the vanished frontier of a "perishing republic," is the latter-day counterpart of Walt, breathing "liberty, health, defiance, gaiety, self-esteem, curiosity" on the beach at Paumonok.

But for this ancestry and opposition, Jeffers is a sport. He grew out of no movement and he has had no followers. Perhaps the Scotch-Irish Calvinism in his blood led him, like Hawthorne, to probe for evil in the soul. Doubtless his schooling in Germany accounts for the Nietzschean nihilism of his philosophy and the Wagnerian overtones of his melodramas. The recurrence of incest in his plots, he tells us, is "symbolized racial introversion: man regarding man exclusively; founding his values, desires, a picture of the universe, all on his own humanity." For humanity, he says prophetically in *Roan Stallion*, the most compact and terrible of his allegories, is "the mould to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal to break into fire, the atom to be split."

**MASTERS, FROST  
AND ROBINSON**      Hardly less devastating an antidote was offered by Edgar Lee Masters, whose *Spoon River Anthology*, published in 1914, gave the composite autobiography of a Middle Western small town in the form of self-inscribed epitaphs. "Petit, the Poet" reveals Masters' own bitterness over the diffusion and "refinement" of American culture:

Woodlands, meadows, streams and rivers—  
Blind to all of it all my life long.  
Triolets, villanelles, rondels, rondeaus,  
Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick,  
Tick, tick, tick, what little iambs,  
While Home and Whitman roared in the pines!

Robert Frost, whose first book was published a year before *Spoon River*, could be—and at 72 still is—as mordantly

satirical. But since he never quite permitted his sharp tongue, his whimsical regionalism, or his reactionary Yankee politics to dominate his humanity, his neighborliness and his curiosity, he has retained undiminished his flavor as a poet longer than any of his contemporaries.

Horace and Wordsworth come to mind in looking back for this pastoral poet's progenitors, though it may be that time will judge Frost a better poet than either. He is like them in his fondness for fables; his self-consciously rustic dispraise of the city; his invention of an informal, colloquial speech to clothe an old-fashioned reflective medium; his didacticism. But his poetry is more flexible and suggestive than the Roman poet's; more critical and less solemn than Wordsworth's.

At once more ambitious than Frost and drier, Edwin Arlington Robinson made a greater initial impression on the poetry-reading public. The impression has been less lasting. The characters in Robinson's epic of the Arthurian age are less Victorian, more human, and certainly more intelligent than Tennyson's, but the epics themselves—for all the valiant exegesis of critics like Yvor Winters—are just as unreadable. It is not that Robinson did not offer psychological insights into character, a brooding compassion for failure, and a direct honesty of dramatic-narrative writing that were altogether unique in American poetry, and quite beyond Tennyson. He did. It was rather that like Browning, whom Robinson resembled in intent and whose epics and plays were also unreadable, he was an essentially bookish literary man, constantly extending himself into fields that demanded the experience of a Chaucer. There is never enough intensity, richness of detail, humor, or just plain gusto, to compensate for the demands on the reader's patience and intellect. The characters talk but do not live. The landscape is too empty. Even the shorter narratives seem much too long.

#### LINDSAY; THE BENÉTS; FEARING

The strain of sentiment that entered the Whitmanesque current in Sandburg and Masters became a sometimes jarring note in the poetry of Vachel Lindsay, and tended to dominate the verse of the Benéts. In an inverted sense it overwhelmed such "proletarian" poets of the '30's as Kenneth Fearing and Muriel Rukeyser.

Lindsay's poetry may be regarded as either the fulfillment or the *reductio ad absurdum* of the popular current.



Practising what Whitman preached, he tramped the roads of the West, offering "Rhymes to be Traded for Bread" for his board, preaching the "Gospel of Beauty" and "The Higher Vaudeville," lecturing for the Y.M.C.A. and the Anti-Saloon League, and reaching a mass audience that Whitman only dreamed of. Yet this was the poet who, with more of a pure lyricist's magic than any American save Poe, burnt himself out, dissipated the well-springs of his verse till it became a childlike Pre-Raphaelite trickle, and finally, "harassed by debt and the sense of defeat," drank a bottle of Lysol in the house in Springfield, Illinois, where he had spent his boyhood. The key to the tragedy, perhaps, lies as much in the split that had taken place in American poetry as in the poet's unstable character; Lindsay was too sensitive and introverted an artist at heart to be contented with the applause of the philistine middle-classes, yet for any more discriminating public he knew not how to write. The miracle was that in a few lyrics and "spirituals" he achieved unconsciously an art irresistible to both.

The ballads and neo-folk-poetry of Stephen Vincent and William Rose Benét were more artful than Lindsay's, and have been almost equally popular, but at their best lack that element of uncontrived madness that occasionally lifts Lindsay's chants above sentimentality into the realm of pure poetry. The savage urban portraits of Kenneth Fearing carried Sandburg's "editorializing" a step further, but into the blind alley of caricature. Muriel Rukeyser's early hymns to the underdog of the "class struggle" achieved a fusion of tenderness and indignation that may yet have issue.

**EZRA POUND**      For better or worse, the dominant  
**AND T. S. ELIOT**      mode of contemporary American  
                                 poetry was not to be the regional and  
Whitmanesque, or the "proletarian." Harriet Monroe's  
*Poetry*, a Chicago monthly which had pioneered in the  
discovery of Sandburg, Masters and Lindsay, led the way  
also in bringing to the American public the first work of the  
Paris "expatriates": Pound and Eliot, Hemingway and  
Stein, Stevens and Cummings.

Imagism (or "Amygism" as Ezra Pound was later to call it after its other co-founder, Amy Lowell) was a term invented in London in 1912 by a group of Georgian poets, which included Hilda Doolittle ("H.D."), to describe their revolt from Victorian circumlocution; the revolt took the direction of free verse with a maximum classic polish and a

minimum of adjectives—and content. H.D. was, and still is, the only pure Imagist. Amy Lowell's brittle, impressionistic verse was secondary to her commanding personality and to her ability to inspire both enthusiasm and publicity. Pound moved impetuously on to other "isms." But Imagism had served to clear the air.

Come, my songs, let us speak of perfection.  
We shall get ourselves rather disliked.

So begins a characteristic early poem by Pound, the bad boy from Idaho, the great catalytic, who was able to make a style—and a very good style, sharp and clean as a scalpel—out of such seemingly haphazard ingredients as Imagism and Vorticism, China and the France of the Troubadours, Guido Cavalcanti and Robert Browning, Rome and the Renaissance, Stephen Crane and Ambrose Bierce. *Il miglior fabbro*—the master craftsman—Eliot was to call him in the dedication to *The Waste Land*, and he was that until the bitterness of his isolation, the animosity generated by his fancied neglect, and the poverty of his rootless egotism burst forth in the uncontrolled eclecticism of the *Cantos* and his petulant espousal of fascism.

T. S. Eliot's development as a poet contrasts with Pound's at almost every point. With Eliot everything is weighed, calculated, refined to the verge of pedantry. "I only pretend to know," he could humorlessly write, "as much about versifying as my carpenter knows about wood-work." In orderly, controlled marches, he moved forward from early disillusionment ("Prufrock"), to despair ("The Waste Land") to flirtation with ritual and authority ("Ash Wednesday") to the High Church ("Murder in the Cathedral"), and finally to the ripe religious-philosophical soul-searching of the *Four Quartets*.

Eliot's grandfather wrote a sermon on "Suffering Considered as a Discipline" and his mother was the author of a poem on the martyred religious fanatic, Savonarola. In his very first poems, Eliot moved with the sureness of a mathematician preparing himself with elementary problems for a distant synthesis. While still at Harvard and under the influence of Santayana and Babbitt, he schooled himself in the tangential approach of the seventeenth century "metaphysical" poets and of Laforgue and the later French symbolists. But the energy generated by Eliot's poems, like their dryness, is his own.

As an American poet—for he remains as firmly if reluc-

tantly American as Auden remains essentially English—Eliot accomplished with symbolism what Robinson, with psychological narrative, failed to achieve: poetic expression of the frustration of modern man. "Whenever our literature tends to produce too many Whitmans," the Gregorys were to write, "an Eliot arrives to counterbalance that cheerful and extraverted tendency." The Hawthorne in Eliot has been remarked. He belongs also in the company of Henry James, whose review of Whitman's *Drum Taps* in 1865 ("... the effort of an essentially prosaic mind to lift itself by prolonged muscular effort into poetry") he would surely have approved. Eliot's influence on English poetry as well as American has been incalculable, and only today shows signs of waning.

**FIVE WOMEN** In an age spilling over with accomplished minor poets, and overcharged with feminine talent, five women stand out for the individuality of their achievements.

Gertrude Stein, the expatriate better known for her operas and ponderous experiments in breaking up language, carried the tendency to abstraction in American writing that began with Emerson and Henry James to its ultimate conclusion.

I have come  
And I've not come in vain.  
I have come to sweep  
The House of the Lord  
Clean, clean, for I've come  
And I've not come in vain . . .

Compare this Shaker hymn of 1845 with Miss Stein's beautiful abstraction on page 104. The subject disappears; the excitement with verbal movement remains.

Edna St. Vincent Millay's theatrical entrance upon the scene of American poetry in 1917 with "Renascence" coincided with the flood-tide of the woman's suffrage movement and heralded the feminist drive for social and sexual equality that was to follow. Her early songs and sonnets have all the youthful *élan* and nostalgia of that uprising. But increasingly the exhortations become more strident, the conventional forms and diction more hollow; Miss Millay's anti-fascist doggerel of 1939-40 is a horrible example of poetry gone mawkish in a good cause.

The verse of Elinor Wylie and Louise Bogan carried to new elevations the "metaphysical" and "classical" tenden-

cies of the day. Mrs. Wylie, with the greater range of the two, exploited the same disillusionment with politics and religion that led to the rich poetry of elaboration and conceit in Donne's time. The world of a mellow "society" and of intense personal relationships is given a timeless glaze to counter chaos beating on the door. More abstractly, Miss Bogan evokes the same shield out of her keenly observed inner life.

More in the cold tradition of Imagism, but with a greater display of wit and intellect than its other poets, Marianne Moore invented a startlingly original style in which prose cadences are held together by elaborate stanzas and occasional rhyme; in consequence, an age that prizes intellect and texture above other virtues of poetry has accorded her great influence.

**E. E. CUMMINGS** When E. E. Cummings, the son of a minister at Boston's Old South Church, left Harvard for the cafés of the Left Bank, it was not to find as Eliot and Henry James had found it in Europe, an atmosphere of tradition in which to cultivate his puritan discriminations. Cummings returned, after a brief apprenticeship to Pound, with his undergraduate flippancy, his typically American distrust of foreigners and intellectuals, reinforced. He was prepared to celebrate Emerson's aristocracy of the individual in his own way, and he has continued to for twenty-five years without any diminishment of spontaneity—or knack of bedeviling and shocking the too-common Common Man. Not content with Frost's ironical and at times querulous offensive against regimentation, Cummings' attack has been frontal—negatively through his ability to hoist the purveyors of standardized sham by their own petard; positively by the never-aging celebration of himself as the epitome of youth, curiosity and passion. The hardboiled speech and addled typography of Cummings' style serve to armor his sentiment and his eroticism. Internal combustion has been his principle, and an imagination that merges the thing described with the way of describing it, his method.

I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing  
Than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance.

**RANSOM AND STEVENS** A chronicle of the second "renaissance" of American poetry would not be complete without mention of two poets whose influence on the poetry of today is pervasive. In

making almost a religion of poetry for poetry's sake, and in writing it with such a concentration of ambiguity, tonal modulation and low-keyed restraint that its virtues are perceptible only to poets themselves, John Crowe Ransom and Wallace Stevens are alike. Ransom, and to a lesser extent his equally gifted colleagues, Robert Penn Warren and Allen Tate, elegizes disenchantment, carrying the Southern alienation and aestheticism of Poe and Sidney Lanier to a new frontier of privacy. Stevens, in his superbly balanced sonatinas of subjective adventure, has given a peculiarly American fillip to the English *fin de siècle* image of the poet *in vacuo*: a successful businessman whose art bears no perceptible relation to what he is doing between 9 and 5.

## VI. *Toward Integration*

As between "Chicago" and "Paris," it was clear by 1930 which division of the "second renaissance" had won the day. Two years before, Stephen Benét's *John Brown's Body* had been a phenomenal best-seller (169,000 copies)—and was already forgotten. *The Waste Land*, published six years earlier, had only begun to reach a small audience but no poet was escaping its influence. The typical poem of the period—and the period is not over yet—followed strictly the rules laid down by Pound, who had defined an image as "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant in time," and by Eliot, whose masterpiece was constructed of hundreds of such images, and which could not be understood without disregarding their actual sequence in the poem in order to "perceive" them simultaneously.

As early as 1920, however, two questions were being asked to trouble the more ambitious artists who had adopted the new style. Since America was far from being a played-out civilization, was in fact still a young one, could such a rarefied, non-naturalistic technique *alone* convey its vitality? And secondly, was the mainstream of American literature—what critics like Van Wyck Brooks and heretical magazines like *The Seven Arts* were beginning to refer to as our "usable past"—to be bypassed entirely?

**MacLEISH AND CRANE**      The year 1930 saw the publication of two significant poems. Hart Crane, a Middle Westerner of New England ancestry whose early lyrics carried Imagism and symbolism to new



extremes, and who had just returned from several unhappy months in Paris, brought out *The Bridge*. Archibald MacLeish, whose background was somewhat similar, and whose first books exhibited an elegiac lyricism subtly derivative of Pound and Eliot, and their French contemporaries, Apollinaire and St.-Jean Perse, published the prelude to *Conquistador*. Both poems represented a strenuous effort to integrate the new style with America, and the fact that neither wholly succeeded could be attributed at least in part to the extreme complexity of the task.

MacLeish's approach to the problem, being the more superficial, produced the more seemingly harmonious result. By superimposing his fluid style, first on the barbaric canvas of Cortez' conquest of Mexico, and later (in *Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City*, *Public Speech* and *America Was Promises*) on three typical phases of the Roosevelt "New Deal," he was able with great skill to create the illusion of symbolist poetry at home in extraverted America and in the service of reform. Actually, the only sea-change that took place in the poetry itself was that as it became more insistently hortatory it became less capable of conveying even its original *timbre*. As the public figure of MacLeish advanced from conquest to conquest, the poetry was left to catch up, improvise manifestoes, and adapt itself to the man who was no longer the original poet. MacLeish had foreseen the dilemma in his justly famous "Invocation to the Social Muse," but acting in violation of his own warning he suffered as a poet the very fate he had predicted.

Young Crane had been among the readers of *The Seven Arts* in 1916, and very probably he had pondered Romain Rolland's Whitmanesque letter of exhortation to that short-lived magazine. Between the over-dense symbolism of "At Melville's Tomb," which he sold to *Poetry* magazine in 1926 after a month of explanatory correspondence with Harriet Monroe, and the complete though anguished mastery of "The Broken Tower," which was written in Mexico just before his suicide in 1932, Crane labored to construct a myth and a *language* which would "link certain chains of the past with certain chains and tendencies of the future." *The Bridge*, which he so described, was a heroic failure. Lacking the emotional stability and intellectual perseverance required to write a poem of such monumental scope, Crane's artistic integrity and "intoxicated" vision were nevertheless so outstanding that he did achieve integration in snatches.

**SECOND PHASE:** John Wheelwright, the gifted Boston  
**THE FORTIES** nonconformist who survived Crane by  
only eight years and who wrote the  
latter's epitaph, once at a public meeting asked Amy Lowell the only question that is known to have embarrassed her. "Miss Lowell," he said, "how do you write poetry if you haven't anything to say?" The question still needs to be asked, for the *typical* poem of the '40's communicates nothing but a mood, but it has at least been faced by some of the young poets who followed Crane—by James Agee and Karl Shapiro, by Theodore Roethke and Peter Viereck and Elizabeth Bishop, by Richard Eberhart and Robert Lowell.

Agee, who took the title of his first book of poems from a line of Crane, became in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* the literary heir of Thoreau. Not since *Walden* had the materialism and spiritual poverty of America been damned with such an intensity of indignation, or countered with such a combination of mystical identification and fierce self-questioning. The form of the book brought Agee into the company of those American poets from Thoreau and Whitman to Melville and Thomas Wolfe who have hovered in their major work between prose and verse. But the social consciousness of this extraordinary prose-poem, which grew out of a routine assignment to write an article on tenant-farming for the magazine *Fortune*, was a legitimate by-product of the '30's.

Roethke, like Kenneth Rexroth and Byron Vazakas, and to a lesser extent Elizabeth Bishop, derived his undressed and deceptively simple style from the cross-grained imagist, William Carlos Williams. Williams had applied the method of arranging "anti-poetic" material in prose cadences to a broader canvas than Marianne Moore ever faced, using it to illuminate by contrast the paradoxical aesthetic bareness and emotional poverty of the richest nation on earth.

Karl Shapiro's restrained but smouldering poems of social protest exploited the same vein of paradox, but in a more traditionally formal style derived in part from Auden. The attitude of personal responsibility for national guilt that lay behind his war poems was in striking contrast to the evasive transference and despair that informed the characteristic poetry of the First World War. Peter Viereck's war poems, more relaxed in metre and drawing deliberately on the "higher vaudeville" of Whitman, Lindsay and the folk singers, promised to convey this healthily satirical message to a wider audience.

The soul-searching strain of New England that had left American poetry when Eliot followed Henry James into exile took fire anew in the work of two Bostonians, Richard Eberhart and Robert Lowell. Eberhart's "The Groundhog" is strictly a confession of the puritan conscience, recalling vividly the passage in *Walden* in which Thoreau explains why he felt compelled to pass a dead horse—to be "refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor." Lowell, who as a conscientious objector and converted Catholic during the War "protested" his faith with the same violence of imagery and strictness of form employed by Edward Taylor, is both by temperament and inflection the heir of Melville. In both these young poets an *energy* of Yankee speech that had not been heard since the great days of Concord was heard again.

**CONCLUSIONS** It is of course too early to say whether any of these younger poets will fulfill their promise. But it is not too early to see that the hopeful direction of poetry since the Second World War is toward a recapture of the American heritage. The wound that opened in the body of American poetry with Emerson's final rejection of Whitman may be healed by them. The dualism that was symbolized by Henry James in that review of *Drum Taps* already quoted, when he prophesied that the American people would reject Whitman "because it is devoted to refinement," cannot be exorcized either by exile or chauvinism, but only by the kind of integration which Crane attempted and which a handful of his followers are trying to complete.

Until such a reconciliation takes place, Whitman, with all his faults, will remain the greatest of our poets. The idea of democracy, which almost from colonial days gave American poetry its unique character, bodies forth with unashamed frankness and sufficient passion in his poetry alone. It follows that the tragedy, the unfulfilled renown of our verse, is due in no small part to the failure of the poets of sensibility to accept that challenge and to the followers of Whitman for wrapping themselves in his Americanism.

*Edward Taylor, 1644 (?) -1729*

### HUSWIFERY

Make me, O Lord, thy Spinning Wheele compleat;  
Thy Holy Worde my Distaff make for mee.  
Make mine Affections thy Swift Flyers neate,  
And make my Soule thy holy Spoole to bee.  
My Conversation make to be thy Reelee,  
And reele the yarn thereon spun of thy Wheele.

Make me thy Loom then, knit therein this Twine:  
And make thy Holy Spirit, Lord, winde quills:  
Then weave the Web thyselfe. The yarn is fine.  
Thine Ordinances make my Fulling Mills.  
Then dy the same in Heavenly Colours Choice,  
All pinkt with Varnish't Flowers of Paradise.

Then cloath therewith mine Understanding, Will,  
Affections, Judgment, Conscience, Memory;  
My words and Actions, that their shine may fill  
My wayes with glory and thee glorify.  
Then mine apparrell shall display before yee  
That I am Cloathed in Holy robes for glory.

### UPON WHAT BASE

Upon what Base was fixt the Lath, wherein  
He turn'd this Globe, and riggalld it so trim?  
Who blew the Bellows of his Furnace Vast?  
Or held the Mould wherein the world was Cast?  
Who laid its Corner Stone? Or whose Command?  
Where stand the Pillars upon which it stands?  
Who Lac'de and Fillitted the earth so fine  
With Rivers like green Ribbons Smaragdine?  
Who made the Sea's its Selvedge, and its locks  
Like a Quilt Ball within a Silver Box?  
Who Spread its Canopy? Or Curtains Spun?  
Who in this Bowling Alley bowld the Sun?

## STANZAS

### *From Difficulties arising from Uncharitable Cariages of Christians*

When these assaults proove vain, the Enemy  
One Saint upon another oft doth set,  
To make each fret like to Gum'd Taffity,  
And fire out Grace thus by a Chase or Fret.  
Uncharitable Christians inj'rous are:  
Two Freestones rubd together each do ware.

When Satan jogs the Elbow of the one  
To Spleenish Passions, which too oft doth rise,  
For want of Charity, or hereupon  
From some Uncharitable harsh Surmise,  
Then the Poore Doubting Soul is oft oppresst  
By hard Reflections from an harder breast.



Such Traps and Wilds as these are, Satan sets  
For to intrap the Innocent therein:  
These are his Wyers, Snares, and tangling Nets,  
To hanck and hopple harmless souls in sin.  
If in such briars thou embrambled light,  
Call on the Mighty God with all thy might.

On God in Christ Call hard: For in him hee  
Hath Bowells melting, and Expanded arms:  
Hath sweet imbraces, Tender mercy, free;  
Hath Might Almighty too to save from harms.  
Into his Dove streak't Downy bosom fly,  
In spite of spite, or spitters Enmity.

These are God's Way-Marks thus inscrib'd; this hand  
Points you the way unto the Land Divine,  
The Land of Promise, Good Immanuels Land,  
To new Jerusalem above the line.  
Ten thousand times thrice tribled blesst he is,  
That walketh in the suburbs here of bliss.





THE BATTLE OF THE KEGS

Gallants attend and hear a friend,  
Trill forth harmonious ditty,  
Strange things I'll tell which late befel  
In Philadelphia city.

'Twas early day, as poets say,  
Just when the sun was rising,  
A soldier stood on a log of wood,  
And saw a thing surprising.

As in amaze he stood to gaze,  
The truth can't be denied, sir,  
He spied a score of kegs or more  
Come floating down the tide, sir.

A sailor too in jerkin blue,  
This strange appearance viewing,  
First damn'd his eyes, in great surprise,  
Then said some mischief's brewing.

These kegs, I'm told, the rebels bold,  
Pack'd up like pickling herring;  
And they're come down t'attack the town  
In this new way of ferrying.

The soldier flew, the sailor too,  
And scar'd almost to death, sir,  
Wore out their shoes, to spread the news,  
And ran till out of breath, sir.

Now up and down throughout the town,  
Most frantic scenes were acted;  
And some ran here and others there,  
Like men almost distracted.

Some fire cry'd, which some denied,  
But said the earth had quaked;  
And girls and boys, with hideous noise,  
Ran thro' the street half naked.

Sir William he, snug as a flea,  
Lay all this time a snoring,  
Nor dream'd of harm as he lay warm,  
In bed with Mrs. Loring.

Now in a fright, he starts upright,  
Awak'd by such a clatter;  
He rubs both eyes, and boldly cries,  
For God's sake, what's the matter?

At his bed-side he then espy'd,  
Sir Erskine at command, sir,  
Upon one foot, he had one boot,  
And th'other in his hand, sir.

'Arise, arise,' Sir Erskine cries,  
'The rebels—more's the pity,  
'Without a boat are all afloat,  
'And rang'd before the city.

'The motley crew, in vessels new,  
'With Satan for their guide, sir,  
'Pack'd up in bags, or wooden kegs,  
'Come driving down the tide, sir.

'Therefore prepare for bloody war,  
'These kegs must all be routed,  
'Or surely we despised shall be,  
'And British courage doubted.'

The royal band, now ready stand  
All rang'd in dread array, sir,  
With stomach stout to see it out,  
And make a bloody day, sir.

The cannons roar from shore to shore,  
The small arms make a rattle;  
Since wars began I'm sure no man  
E'er saw so strange a battle.

The rebels dales, the rebel vales,  
With rebel trees surrounded;  
The distant wood, the hills and floods,  
With rebel echoes sounded.

The fish below swam to and fro,  
Attack'd from ev'ry quarter;  
Why sure, thought they, the devil's to pay,  
'Mongst folks above the water.

The kegs, 'tis said, tho' strongly made,  
Of rebel staves and hoops, sir,  
Could not oppose their powerful foes,  
The conqu'ring British troops, sir.

From morn to night these men of might  
Display'd amazing courage;  
And when the sun was fairly down,  
Retir'd to sup their porrage.

An hundred men with each a pen,  
Or more upon my word, sir.  
It is most true would be too few,  
Their valour to record, sir.

Such feats did they perform that day,  
Against these wick'd kegs, sir,  
That years to come, if they get home,  
They'll make their boasts and brags, sir.

EPISTLE

From *Dr. Franklin (deceased) to his Poetical Panegyrists  
on some of their absurd compliments*

Good Poets, who so full of pain,  
Are you sincere—or do you feign?  
Love for your tribe I never had,  
Nor penned three stanzas, good or bad.

At funerals, sometimes, grief appears,  
Where legacies have purchased tears;  
’Tis folly to be sad for nought,  
From me you never gained a groat.

To better trades I turned my views,  
And never meddled with the muse;  
Great things I did for rising states,  
And kept the lightning from some pates.

This grand discovery you adore it,  
But ne’er will be the better for it:  
You still are subjects to those fires,  
For Poets’ houses have no spires.

Philosophers are famed for pride;  
But, pray, be modest—when I died  
No “sighs disturbed old ocean’s bed,”  
No “nature wept” for Franklin dead!

That day, on which I left the coast,  
A beggar man was also lost:  
If “nature wept,” you must agree,  
She wept for *him* as well as *me*.

There’s reason even in telling lies,  
In such profusion of her “sighs,”  
She was too sparing of a tear—  
In Carolina, all was clear:

And if there fell some snow and sleet  
Why must it be my winding sheet?  
Snows oft have cloathed the *April* plain,  
Have melted, and will meet again.

Poets, I pray you, say no more,  
Or say what Nature said before;  
That reason showed your pens direct,  
Or else you pay me no respect.

Let reason be your constant rule,  
And Nature, trust me, is no fool  
When to the dust great men she brings,  
"Make her do—SOME UNCOMMON THINGS."

## DEATH

From *The House of Night*

Dark was the sky, and not one friendly star  
Shone from the zenith or horizon clear,  
Mist sate upon the woods, and darkness rode  
In her black chariot, with a wild career.

And from the woods the late resounding note  
Issued of the loquacious Whip-poor-will,  
Hoarse, howling dogs, and nightly roving wolves  
Clamour'd from far off cliffs invisible.

Rude from the wide extended Chesapeake  
I heard the winds the dashing waves assail,  
And saw from far, by picturing fancy form'd,  
The black ship travelling through the noisy gale.



O'er a dark field I held my dubious way  
Where Jack-a-lantern walk'd his lonely round;  
Beneath my feet substantial darkness lay,  
And screams were heard from the distemper'd ground.

Nor look'd I back, till to a far-off wood  
Trembling with fear, my weary feet had sped—  
Dark was the night but at the enchanted dome  
I saw the infernal windows flaming red;



And from within the howls of Death I heard,  
Cursing the dismal night that gave him birth,  
Damning his ancient sire and mother sin,  
Who at the gates of hell, accurséd, brought him forth.

(For fancy gave to my enraptur'd soul  
An eagle's eye, with keenest glance to see,  
And bade those distant sounds distinctly roll,  
Which, waking, never had affected me.)



Though humbled now, dishearten'd and distress,  
Yet when admitted to the peaceful ground  
With heroes, kings and conquerors—I shall rest,  
Shall sleep as safely, and perhaps as sound.

A CHOICE IN SPOONS

From *The Hasty Pudding*

There is a choice in spoons. Though small appear  
The nice distinction, yet to me 'tis clear.  
The deep-bowled Gallic spoon, contrived to scoop  
In ample draughts the thin, diluted soup,  
Performs not well in those substantial things,  
Whose mass adhesive to the metal clings;  
Where the strong labial muscles must embrace  
The gentle curve, and sweep the hollow space  
With ease to enter and discharge the freight,  
A bowl less concave, but still more dilate,  
Becomes the pudding best. The shape, the size,  
A secret rests, unknown to vulgar eyes.  
Experienced feeders can alone impart  
A rule so much above the lore of art.  
These tuneful lips that thousand spoons have tried,  
With just precision could the point decide,  
Though not in song; the Muse but poorly shines  
In cones, and cubes, and geometric lines;  
Yet the true form, as near as she can tell,  
Is that small section of a goose-egg shell,  
Which in two equal portions shall divide  
The distance from the center to the side.  
Fear not to slaver; 'tis no deadly sin;—  
Like the free Frenchman, from your joyous chin  
Suspend the ready napkin; or, like me,  
Poise with one hand your bowl upon your knee;  
Just in the zenith your wise head project,  
Your full spoon, rising in a line direct,  
Bold as a bucket, heed no drops that fall,  
The wide-mouthed bowl will surely catch them all!

*Anonymous*

THE WHORE  
ON THE SNOW CRUST

New England Broadside  
in Defence of Bundling, c. 1786

Adam at first was formed of dust,  
As we find of record;  
And did receive a wife call'd Eve,  
By a creative word.

From Adam's side a crooked bride,  
We find complete in form;  
Ordained that they in bed might lay  
And keep each other warm.

To court indeed they had no need,  
She was his wife at first,  
And she was made to be his aid  
Whose origin was dust.

Though Adam's wife destroyed his life  
In manner that is awful,  
Yet marriage now we all allow  
To be both just and lawful.

And nowadays there is two ways,  
Which of the two is right:  
To lie between sheets sweet and clean  
Or sit up all the night.

But some suppose bundling in cloaths  
The good and wise doth vex;  
Then let me know which way to go  
To court the fairer sex.

Whether they must be hugg'd and buss'd  
When sitting up all night;  
Or whether they in bed may lay,  
Which doth reason invite?

Nature's request is, give me rest,  
Our bodies seek repose;  
Night is the time, and 'tis no crime  
To bundle in our cloaths.

Since in a bed a man and maid  
May bundle and be chaste,  
It doth no good to burn up wood;  
It is a needless waste.

Let coat and shift be turned adrift,  
And breeches take their flight;  
And honest man and virgin can  
Lie quiet all the night;

But if there be dishonesty  
Implanted in the mind,  
Breeches nor smocks nor scarce padlocks  
The rage of lust can bind.

Kate, Nance and Sue proved just and true  
Though bundling did practise;  
But Ruth beguil'd and proved with child  
Who bundling did despise.

Whores will be whores, and on the floors  
Where many have been laid,  
To set and smoke and ashes poke  
Won't keep awake a maid.

Bastards are not at all times got  
In feather beds, we know;  
The strumpet's oath convinces both  
Ofttimes it is not so.

One whorish dame I fear to name  
Lest I should give offense,  
But in this town she was took down  
Not more than eight months since.

She was the first that on snow crust  
I ever knew to gender;  
I'll hint no more about this whore  
For fear I should offend her.

'Twas on the snow when Sol was low  
And was in Capricorn,  
A child was got and it will not  
Be long ere it is born.

So unto those that do oppose  
The bundling trade, I say:  
Perhaps there's more got on the floor  
Than any other way.

HEROISM

Ruby Wine is drunk by knaves,  
Sugar spends to fatten slaves,  
Rose and vine-leaf deck buffoons;  
Thunder-clouds are Jove's festoons,  
Drooping oft in wreaths of dread,  
Lightning knotted round his head;  
The hero is not fed on sweets,  
Daily his own heart he eats;  
Chambers of the great are jails,  
And head-winds right for royal sails.

HAMATREYA

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Meriam, Flint,  
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil  
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood.  
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,  
Saying, "'Tis mine, my children's and my name's.  
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!  
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!  
I fancy these pure waters and the flags  
Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;  
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:  
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.  
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys,  
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;  
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet  
Clear of the grave.  
They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,  
And sighed for all that bounded their domain;  
'This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;  
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,  
And misty lowland, where to go for peat.  
The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.

"'Tis good, when you have crossed the sea and back,  
To find the sitfast acres where you left them."  
Ah! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds  
Him to his land, a lump of mould the more . . .



## MITHRIDATES

I cannot spare water or wine,  
Tobacco-leaf, or poppy, or rose;  
From the earth-poles to the Line,  
All between that works or grows,  
Every thing is kin of mine.

Give me agates for my meat;  
Give me cantharids to eat;  
From air and ocean bring me foods,  
From all zones and altitudes;—

From all natures, sharp and slimy,  
Salt and basalt, wild and tame:  
Tree and lichen, ape, sea-lion,  
Bird, and reptile, be my game.

Ivy for my fillet band;  
Blinding dog-wood in my hand;  
Hemlock for my sherbet cull me,  
And prussic juice to lull me;  
Swing me in the upas boughs,  
Vampyre-fanned, when I carouse.

Too long shut in strait and few,  
Thinly dieted on dew,  
I will use the world, and sift it,  
To a thousand humors shift it,  
As you spin a cherry.  
O doleful ghosts, and goblins merry!  
O all you virtues, methods, mights,  
Means, appliances, delights,  
Reputed wrongs and braggart rights,  
Smug routine, and things allowed,  
Minorities, things under cloud!  
Hither, take me, use me, fill me,  
Vein and artery, though ye kill me!

## THE SNOW-STORM

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,  
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air  
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,  
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.

The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed  
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.  
Out of an unseen quarry evermore  
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer  
Curves his white bastions with projected roof  
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.  
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work  
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he  
For number or proportion. Mockingly,  
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;  
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;  
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,  
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate  
A tapering turret overtops the work.  
And when his hours are numbered, and the world  
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,  
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art  
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,  
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,  
The frolic architecture of the snow.

## ODE

Inscribed to W. H. Channing

Though loath to grieve  
The evil time's sole patriot,  
I cannot leave  
My honeyed thought  
For the priest's cant,  
Or statesman's rant.

If I refuse  
My study for their politique,  
Which at the best is trick,  
The angry Muse  
Puts confusion in my brain.

But who is he that prates  
Of the culture of mankind,  
Of better arts and life?  
Go, blindworm, go,

Behold the famous States  
Harrying Mexico  
With rifle and with knifel

Or who, with accent bolder,  
Dare praise the freedom-loving mountaineer?  
I found by thee, O rushing, Contoocook!  
And in thy valleys, Agiochook!  
The jackals of the negro-holder.

The God who made New Hampshire  
Taunted the lofty land  
With little men;  
Small bat and wren  
House in the oak:  
If earth-fire cleave  
The upheaved land, and bury the folk,  
The southern crocodile would grieve.  
Virtue palter; Right is hence;  
Freedom praised, but hid;  
Funeral eloquence  
Rattles the coffin-lid.

What boots thy zeal,  
O glowing friend,  
That would indignant rend  
The northland from the south?  
Wherefore? to what good end?  
Boston Bay and Bunker Hill  
Would serve things still;  
Things are of the snake.

The horseman serves the horse,  
The neatherd serves the neat,  
The merchant serves the purse,  
The eater serves his meat;  
'Tis the day of the chattel,  
Web to weave, and corn to grind;  
Things are in the saddle,  
And ride mankind.  
There are two laws discrete,  
Not reconciled,  
Law for man, and law for thing;  
The last builds town and fleet,  
But it runs wild,  
And doth the man unking.

'Tis fit the forest fall,  
The steep be graded,  
The mountain tunnelled,  
The sand shaded,  
The orchard planted,  
The glebe tilled,  
The prairie granted,  
The steamer built.

Let man serve law for man;  
Live for friendship, live for love,  
For truth's and harmony's behoof;  
The state may follow how it can,  
As Olympus follows Jove.

Yet do not I implore  
The wrinkled shopman to my sounding woods,  
Nor bid the unwilling senator  
Ask votes of thrushes in the solitudes.  
Every one to his chosen work;  
Foolish hands may mix and mar;  
Wise and sure the issues are.  
Round they roll till dark is light,  
Sex to sex, and even to odd;  
The over-god  
Who marries Right to Might,  
Who peoples, unpeoples,  
He who exterminates  
Races by stronger races,  
Black by white faces,  
Knows to bring honey  
Out of the lion;  
Grafts gentlest scion  
On pirate and Turk.

The Cossack eats Poland,  
Like stolen fruit;  
Her last noble is ruined,  
Her last poet mute;  
Straight, into double band  
The victors divide;  
Half for freedom strike and stand;  
The astonished Muse finds thousands at her side.

## TERMINUS

It is time to be old,  
To take in sail:—  
The god of bounds,  
Who sets to seas a shore,  
Came to me in his fatal rounds,  
And said: 'No more!  
No farther shoot  
Thy broad ambitious branches, and thy root.  
Fancy departs: no more invent;  
Contract thy firmament  
To compass of a tent.  
There's not enough for this and that,  
Make thy option which of two;  
Economize the failing river,  
Not the less revere the Giver,  
Leave the many and hold the few.  
Timely wise accept the terms,  
Soften the fall with wary foot;  
A little while  
Still plan and smile,  
And,—fault of novel germs,—  
Mature the unfallen fruit.  
Curse, if thou wilt, thy sire,  
Bad husbands of their fires,  
Who, when they gave thee breath,  
Failed to bequeath  
The needful sinew stark as once,  
The Baresark marrow to thy bones,  
But left a legacy of ebbing veins,  
Inconstant heat and nerveless reins,—  
Amid the Muses, left thee deaf and dumb,  
Amid the gladiators, halt and numb.'

As the bird trims her to the gale,  
I trim myself to the storm of time,  
I man the rudder, reef the sail,  
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:  
'Lowly faithful, banish fear,  
Right onward drive unharmed;  
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,  
And every wave is charmed.'

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807-1882*

THE JEWISH CEMETERY  
AT NEWPORT

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their graves,  
Close by the street of this fair seaport town,  
Silent beside the never-silent waves,  
At rest in all this moving up and down.

The trees are white with dust, that o'er their sleep  
Wave their broad curtains in the south wind's breath,  
While underneath such leafy tents they keep  
The long mysterious Exodus of Death.

And these sepulchral stones, so old and brown,  
That pave with level flags their burial-place,  
Seem like the tablets of the Law, thrown down  
And broken by Moses at the mountain's base.

The very names recorded here are strange,  
Of foreign accent, and of different climes;  
Alvares and Rivera interchange  
With Abraham and Jacob of old times.

"Blessed be God! for he created Death!"  
The mourner said, "and Death is rest and peace";  
Then added, in the certainty of faith,  
"And giveth Life that never more shall cease."

Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,  
No Psalms of David now the silence break,  
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue  
In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.

Gone are the living, but the dead remain,  
And not neglected; for a hand unseen,  
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,  
Still keeps their graves and their remembrance green.

How came they here? What burst of Christian hate,  
What persecution, merciless and blind,  
Drove o'er the sea—that desert desolate—  
These Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind?



They lived in narrow streets and lanes obscure,  
Ghetto and Judenstrass, in mirk and mire;  
Taught in the school of patience to endure  
The life of anguish and the death of fire.

All their lives long, with the unleavened bread  
And bitter herbs of exile and its fears,  
The wasting famine of the heart that fed,  
And slaked its thirst with Marah of their tears.

Anathema maranatha! was the cry  
That rang from town to town, from street to street;  
At every gate the accursed Mordecai  
Was mocked and jeered, and spurned by Christian feet.

Pride and humiliation hand in hand  
Walked with them through the world where'er they  
went;  
Trampled and beaten were they as the sand  
And yet unshaken as the continent,

For in the background figures vague and vast  
Of patriarchs and of prophets rose sublime,  
And all the great traditions of the Past  
They saw reflected in the coming time.

And thus forever with reverted look  
The mystic volume of the world they read,  
Spelling it backward, like a Hebrew book,  
Till life became a Legend of the Dead.

But ah! what once has been shall be no more!  
The groaning earth in travail and in pain  
Brings forth its races, but does not restore,  
And the dead nations never rise again.

THE SUN THAT BRIEF  
DECEMBER DAY

*From Snow-Bound*

The sun that brief December day  
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,  
And, darkly circled, gave at noon  
A sadder light than waning moon.  
Slow tracing down the thickening sky  
Its mute and ominous prophecy,  
A portent seeming less than threat,  
It sank from sight before it set.  
A chill no coat, however stout,  
Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,  
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,  
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race  
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,  
The coming of the snow-storm told.  
The wind blew east; we heard the roar  
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,  
And felt the strong pulse throbbing there  
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—  
Brought in the wood from out of doors,  
Littered the stalls, and from the mows  
Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows:  
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;  
And, sharply clashing horn on horn,  
Impatient down the stanchion rows  
The cattle shake their walnut bows;  
While, peering from his early perch  
Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,  
The cock his crested helmet bent  
And down his querulous challenge sent.

☆ ☆ ☆

LATTER-DAY WARNINGS

From *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*

When legislators keep the law,  
When banks dispense with bolts and locks,  
When berries, whortle—rasp—and straw—  
Grow bigger *downwards* through the box,—

When he that selleth house or land  
Shows leak in roof or flaw in right,—  
When haberdashers choose the stand  
Whose window hath the broadest light,—

When preachers tell as all they think,  
And party leaders all they mean,—  
When what we pay for, that we drink,  
From real grape and coffee-bean,—

When lawyers take what they would give,  
And doctors give what they would take,—  
When city fathers eat to live,  
Save when they fast for conscience' sake,—

When one that hath a horse on sale  
Shall bring his merit to the proof,  
Without a lie for every nail  
That holds the iron on the hoof,—

When in the usual place for rips  
Our gloves are stitched with special care,  
And guarded well the whalebone tips  
Where first umbrellas need repair,—

When Cuba's weeds have quite forgot  
The power of suction to resist,  
And claret-bottles harbor not  
Such dimples as would hold your fist,—

When publishers no longer steal,  
And pay for what they stole before,—  
When the first locomotive's wheel  
Rolls through the Hoosac tunnel's bore;—

*Till* then let Cumming blaze away,  
And Miller's saints blow up the globe;  
But when you see that blessed day,  
*Then* order your ascension robe!

SONNET—TO SCIENCE

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!  
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.  
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,  
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?  
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,  
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering  
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,  
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?  
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?  
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood  
To seek a shelter in some happier star?  
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,  
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me  
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

THE CITY IN THE SEA

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne  
In a strange city lying alone  
Far down within the dim West  
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best  
Have gone to their eternal rest.  
There shrines and palaces and towers  
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)  
Resemble nothing that is ours.  
Around, by lifting winds forgot,  
Resignedly beneath the sky  
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy Heaven come down  
On the long night-time of that town;  
But light from out the lurid sea  
Streams up the turrets silently—  
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—  
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—  
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—  
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers  
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—  
Up many and many a marvellous shrine  
Whose wreathéd friezes intertwine  
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly beneath the sky  
The melancholy waters lie.  
So blend the turrets and shadows there  
That all seem pendulous in air,  
While from a proud tower in the town  
Death looks gigantically down.



## THE HAUNTED PALACE

In the greenest of our valleys  
By good angels tenanted,  
Once a fair and stately palace—  
Radiant palace—reared its head.  
In the monarch Thought's dominion,  
It stood there!  
Never seraph spread a pinion  
Over fabric half so fair!

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,  
On its roof did float and flow  
(This—all this—was in the olden  
Time, long ago,)  
And every gentle air that dallied,  
In that sweet day,  
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,  
A wingéd odor went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,  
Through two luminous windows, saw  
Spirits moving musically  
To a lute's well-tuned law,  
Round about a throne where, sitting,  
(Porphyrogenet!)  
In state his glory well befitting,  
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing  
Was the fair palace door,  
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing  
And sparkling evermore,  
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty  
Was but to sing,  
In voices of surpassing beauty,  
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,  
Assailed the monarch's high estate;  
(Ah, let us mourn!—for never morrow  
Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)  
And round about his home the glory  
That blushed and bloomed  
Is but a dim-remembered story  
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers, now, within that valley,  
Through the red-litten windows see  
Vast forms that move fantastically  
To a discordant melody;  
While, like a ghastly rapid river,  
Through the pale door  
A hideous throng rush out forever,  
And laugh—but smile no more.



*Jones Very, 1830-1880*

THY BROTHER'S BLOOD

I have no brother. They who meet me now  
Offer a hand with their own wills defiled,  
And, while they wear a smooth unwrinkled brow,  
Know not that truth can never be beguiled.  
Go wash the hand that still betrays thy guilt;—  
Before the Spirit's gaze what stain can hide?  
Abel's red blood upon the earth is spilt  
And by thy tongue it cannot be denied.  
I hear not with the ear,—the heart doth tell  
Its secret deeds to me, untold before;  
Go, all its hidden plunder quickly sell,  
Then shalt thou cleanse thee from thy brother's gore,  
Then will I take thy gift; that bloody stain  
Shall not be seen upon thy hand again.

THE SUMMER RAIN

My books I'd fain cast off, I cannot read,  
Twixt every page my thoughts go stray at large  
Down in the meadow, where is richer feed,  
And will not mind to hit their proper targe.

Plutarch was good, and so was Homer too,  
Our Shakespeare's life were rich to live again,  
What Plutarch read, that was not good nor true,  
Nor Shakespeare's books, unless his books were men.

Here while I lie beneath this walnut bough,  
What care I for the Greeks or for Troy town,  
If juster battles are enacted now  
Between the ants upon this hummock's crown?

Bid Homer wait till I the issue learn,  
If red or black the gods will favor most,  
Or yonder Ajax will the phalanx turn,  
Struggling to heave some rock against the host.

Tell Shakespeare to attend some leisure hour,  
For now I've business with this drop of dew,  
And see you not, the clouds prepare a shower,—  
I'll meet him shortly when the sky is blue.

This bed of herdsgrass and wild oats was spread  
Last year with nicer skill than monarchs use.  
A clover tuft is pillow for my head,  
And violets quite overtop my shoes.

And now the cordial clouds have shut all in,  
And gently swells the wind to say all's well;  
The scattered drops are falling fast and thin,  
Some in the pool, some in the flowerbell.

I am well drenched upon my bed of oats;  
But see that globe come rolling down its stem,  
Now like a lonely planet there it floats,  
And now it sinks into my garment's hem.

Drip, drip the trees for all the country round,  
And richness rare distills from every bough;  
The wind alone it is makes every sound,  
Shaking down crystals on the leaves below.

For shame the sun will never show himself,  
Who could not with his beams e'er melt me so;  
My dripping locks,—they would become an elf,  
Who in a beaded coat does gayly go.

### HAZE

Woof of the sun, ethereal gauze,  
Woven of Nature's richest stuffs,  
Visible heat, air-water, and dry sea,  
Last conquest of the eye;  
Toil of the day displayed, sun-dust,  
Aerial surf upon the shores of earth,  
Ethereal estuary, frith of light,  
Breakers of air, billows of heat,  
Fine summer spray on inland seas;  
Bird of the sun, transparent-winged,  
Owlet of noon, soft-pinioned,  
From heath or stubble rising without song,—  
Establish thy serenity o'er the fields.

### CONSCIENCE

Conscience is instinct bred in the house,  
Feeling and Thinking propagate the sin  
By an unnatural breeding in and in.  
I say, Turn it out doors,  
Into the moors.  
I love a life whose plot is simple,  
And does not thicken with every pimple,  
A soul so sound no sickly conscience binds it,  
That makes the universe no worse than't finds it.  
I love an earnest soul,  
Whose mighty joy and sorrow  
Are not drowned in a bowl,  
And brought to life to-morrow;  
That lives one tragedy,  
And not seventy;  
A conscience worth keeping,  
Laughing not weeping;  
A conscience wise and steady,  
And for ever ready;  
Not changing with events,  
Dealing in compliments;  
A conscience exercised about

Large things, where one *may* doubt.  
I love a soul not all of wood,  
Predestinated to be good,  
But true to the backbone  
Unto itself alone,  
And false to none;  
Born to its own affairs,  
Its own joys and own cares;  
By whom the work which God begun  
Is finished, and not undone;  
Taken up where he left off,  
Whether to worship or to scoff;  
If not good, why then evil,  
If not good god, good devil.  
Goodness!—you hypocrite, come out of that,  
Live your life, do your work, then take your ha  
I have no patience towards  
Such conscientious cowards.  
Give me simple laboring folk,  
Who love their work,  
Whose virtue is a song  
To cheer God along.

AND HERE THE HERMIT SAT,  
AND TOLD HIS BEADS

And here the hermit sat, and told his beads,  
And stroked his flowing locks, red as the fire,  
Summed up his tale of moon and sun and star:  
'How blest are we,' he deemed, 'who so comprise  
The essence of the whole, and of ourselves,  
As in a Venice flask of lucent shape,  
Ornate of gilt Arabic, and inscribed  
With Suras from Time's Koran, live and pray,  
More than half grateful for the glittering prize,  
Human existence! If I note my powers,  
So poor and frail a toy, the insect's prey,  
Itched by a berry, festered by a plum,  
The very air infecting my thin frame  
With its malarial trick, whom every day  
Rushes upon and hustles to the grave,  
Yet raised, by the great love that broods o'er all  
Responsive, to a height beyond all thought.'

He ended, as the nightly prayer and fast  
Summoned him inward. But I sat and heard  
The night-hawks rip the air above my head,  
Till midnight o'er the warm, dry, dewless rocks;  
And saw the blazing dog-star droop his fire,  
And the low comet, trailing to the south,  
Bend his reverted gaze, and leave us free.

EMERSON

*From A Fable for Critics*

'There are persons, mole-blind to the soul's make and style,  
Who insist on a likeness 'twixt him and Carlyle;  
To compare him with Plato would be vastly fairer,  
Carlyle's the more burly, but E. is the rarer;  
He sees fewer objects, but clearer, trulier,  
If C.'s as original, E's more peculiar;  
That he's more of a man you might say of the one,  
Of the other he's more of an Emerson;  
C.'s the Titan, as shaggy of mind as of limb,—  
E. the clear-eyed Olympian, rapid and slim;  
The one's two-thirds Norseman, the other half Greek,  
Where the one's most abounding, the other's to seek;  
C.'s generals require to be seen in the mass,—  
E.'s specialties gain if enlarged by the glass;  
C. gives nature and God his own fits of the blues,  
And rims common-sense things with mystical hues,—  
E. sits in a mystery calm and intense,  
And looks coolly around him with sharp common sense;  
C. shows you how every-day matters unite  
With the dim transdiurnal recesses of night,—  
While E., in a plain, preternatural way,  
Makes mysteries matters of mere every day;  
C. draws all his characters quite à la Fuseli,—  
Not sketching their bundles of muscles and thews illy,  
He paints with a brush so untamed and profuse,  
They seem nothing but bundles of muscles and thews;  
E. is rather like Flaxman, lines strait and severe,  
And a colorless outline, but full, round, and clear;—  
To the men he thinks worthy he frankly accords  
The design of a white marble statue in words.  
C. labors to get at the centre, and then  
Take a reckoning from there of his actions and men;  
E. calmly assumes the said centre as granted,  
And, given himself, has whatever is wanted.



*'Anonymous*

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE AN  
EAGLE IN DE AIR

Negro Spiritual, Nineteenth Century

Sometimes I feel like an eagle in de air  
Some-a dese mornin's bright an' fair  
I'm goin' to lay down my heavy load;  
Goin' to spread my wings an' cleave de air.  
You may bury me in de east,  
You may bury me in de west,  
But I'll hear de trumpet sound  
In-a dat mornin'.

*Julia Ward Howe, 1819-1910*

THE BATTLE HYMN OF THE  
REPUBLIC

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath  
are stored;

He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift  
sword;

His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling  
camps;

They have builded Him an altar in the evening dew and  
damps;

I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring  
lamps;

His day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:  
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace  
shall deal;

Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his  
heel,

Since God is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call  
retreat;

He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-  
seat:

Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my  
feet!

Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,  
While God is marching on.

*Herman Melville, 1819-1891*

THE MARCH INTO VIRGINIA

Ending in the First Manassas (July, 1861)

Did all the lets and bars appear  
To every just or larger end,  
Whence should come the trust and cheer?  
Youth must its ignorant impulse end—  
Age finds place in the rear.  
All wars are boyish and are fought by boys,  
The champions and enthusiasts of the state;  
Turbid ardours and vain joys  
Not barrenly abate—  
Stimulants to the power mature,  
Preparatives of fate.

Who here forecasteth the event?  
What heart but spurns at precedent  
And warnings of the wise,  
Contemned foreclosures of surprise?  
The banners play, the bugles call,  
The air is blue and prodigal.  
No berrying-party, pleasure-wooded,  
No picnic party in the May,  
Ever went less loth than they  
Into that leafy neighborhood.  
In Bacchic glee they file toward Fate,  
Moloch's uninitiate;  
Expectancy, and glad surmise  
Of battle's unknown mysteries.  
All they feel is this: 'tis glory,  
A rapture sharp, though transitory,  
Yet lasting in belaurelled story.  
So they gaily go to fight,  
Chatting left and laughing right.

But some who this blithe mood present,  
As on in lightsome files they fare,  
Shall die experienced ere three days are spent—  
Perish, enlightened by the volleyed glare;  
Or shame survive, and, like to adamant,  
The throes of Second Manassas share.

## WHERE'S COMMANDER ALL-A-TANTO?

From *Bridegroom Dick*

Where's Commander All-a-Tanto?  
Where's Orlop Bob singing up from below?  
Where's Rhyming Ned? has he spun his last canto?  
Where's Jewsharp Jim? Where's Rigadoon Joe?  
Ah, for the music over and done,  
The band all dismissed save the droned trombone!  
Where's Glen o' the gun-room, who loved Hot-Scotch—  
Glen, prompt and cool in a perilous watch?  
Where's flaxen-haired Phil? a grey lieutenant?  
Or rubicund, flying a dignified pennant?  
But where sleeps his brother?—the cruise it was o'er,  
But ah, for death's grip that welcomed him ashore!  
Where's Sid, the cadet, so frank in his brag,  
Whose toast was audacious—'*Here's Sid, and Sid's flag!*'  
Like holiday craft that have sunk unknown,  
May a lark of a lad go lonely down?  
Who takes the census under the sea?  
Can others like old ensigns be,  
Bunting I hoisted to flutter at the gaff—  
Rags in end that once were flags  
Gallant streaming from the staff?  
Such scurvy doom could the chances deal  
To Top-Gallant Harry and Jack Genteel?  
Lo, Genteel Jack in hurricane weather,  
Shagged like a bear, like a red lion roaring;  
But O, so fine in his chapeau and feather,  
In port to the ladies never once *jawing*;  
All bland *politesse*, how urbane was he—  
'*Oui, mademoiselle*'—'*Ma chère amie!*'

'Twas Jack got up the ball at Naples,  
Gay in the old *Ohio* glorious;  
His hair was curled by the berth-deck barber,  
Never you'd deemed him a cub of rude Boreas;  
In tight little pumps, with the grand dames in rout,  
A-flinging his shapely foot all about;  
His watch-chain with love's jewelled tokens abounding,  
Curls ambrosial shaking out odours,  
Waltzing along the batteries, astounding  
The gunner glum and the grim-visaged loaders.

Wife, where be all these blades, I wonder,  
Pennoned fine fellows, so strong, so gay?  
Never their colours with a dip dived under;  
Have they hauled them down in a lack-lustre day,  
Or beached their boats in the Far, Far Away?



## FATHER MAPPLE'S HYMN

*From Moby Dick*

The ribs and terrors in the whale,  
    Arched over me a dismal gloom,  
While all God's sunlit waves rolled by,  
    And left me deepening down to doom.

I saw the opening maw of hell,  
    With endless pains and sorrows there;  
Which none but they that feel can tell—  
    Oh, I was plunging to despair.

In black distress, I called my God,  
    When I could scarce believe Him mine,  
He bowed his ear to my complaints—  
    No more the whale did me confine.

With speed He flew to my relief,  
    As on a radiant dolphin borne;  
Awful, yet bright as lightning shone  
    The face of my Deliverer God.

My song for ever shall record  
    That terrible, that joyful hour;  
I give the glory to my God,  
    His all the mercy and the power.

*Walt Whitman, 1819-1892*

COME MUSE MIGRATE FROM  
GREECE AND IONIA

*From Song of the Exposition*

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,  
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,  
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas',  
Odysseus' wanderings,  
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your  
snowy Parnassus,  
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate  
and on Mount Moriah,  
The same on the walls of your German, French, and Span-  
ish castles, and Italian collections,  
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried  
domain awaits, demands you.



Responsive to our summons,  
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,  
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,  
She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,  
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,  
I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,  
Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames! can I believe then,  
Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of  
them retain her?  
Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories,  
poems, old associations, magnetise and hold on  
to her?  
But that she's left them all—and here?  
Yes, if you will allow me to say so,  
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see her,  
The same undying soul of earth's, activity's, beauty's,  
heroism's expression,  
Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of  
her former themes.  
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,  
Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice by Castaly's  
fountain,  
Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all those  
century-baffling tombs,



Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted war-  
 riors, ended the primitive call of the muses,  
 Calliope's call for ever closed, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia  
 dead,  
 Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the  
 quest of the holy Graal,  
 Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,  
 The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped  
 with the sunrise,  
 Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne, Rolland,  
 Oliver gone,  
 Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk  
 from its waters reflected,  
 Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot  
 and Galahad, all gone, dissolv'd utterly like an  
 exhalation;  
 Pass'd! pass'd! for us, for ever pass'd, that once so mighty  
 world, now void, inanimate, phantom world,  
 Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gor-  
 geous legends, myths,  
 Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords  
 and courtly dames,  
 Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown and armor  
 on,  
 Blazon'd with Shakespeare's purple page,  
 And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious émigré  
 (having it is true in her day, although the same,  
 changed, journey'd considerable),  
 Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a  
 path for herself, striding through the confusion,  
 By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undis-  
 may'd,  
 Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial ferti-  
 lizers,  
 Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,  
 She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

## I CELEBRATE MYSELF

### From *Song of Myself*

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
 And what I assume you shall assume,  
 For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer  
grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,  
this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and  
their parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never  
forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every  
hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.



The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his fore-  
plane whistles its wild ascending lisp,  
The married and unmarried children ride home to their  
Thanksgiving dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a  
strong arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and har-  
poon are ready,  
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the  
big wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day  
loafe and looks at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd  
case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his  
mother's bedroom);  
The jour printer with grey head and gaunt jaws works at  
his case,  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blur with the  
manuscript;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;  
The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunk-  
ard nods by the bar-room stove,

The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels  
his beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass,  
The young fellow drives the express-wagon (I love him,  
though I do not know him);  
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the  
race  
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some  
lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,  
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his posi-  
tion, levels his piece;  
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or  
levee,  
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer  
views them from his saddle,  
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for  
their partners, the dancers bow to each other,  
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks  
to the musical rain,  
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the  
Huron,  
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering  
moccasins and bead-bags for sale,  
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with  
half-shut eyes bent sideways,  
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is  
thrown for the shore-going passengers,  
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister  
winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then for  
the knots,  
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week  
ago borne her first child,  
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-  
machine or in the factory or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the re-  
porter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the  
sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper  
counts at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his  
thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the per-  
formers follow him,  
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first pro-  
fessions,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun (how  
the white sails sparkle!)

The drover watching his drove sings out to them that  
     would stray,  
 The pedlar sweats with his pack on his back (the pur-  
     chaser haggling about the odd cent);  
 The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of  
     the clock moves slowly,  
 The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd  
     lips,  
 The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her  
     tipsy and pimpled neck,  
 The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer  
     and wink to each other,  
 (Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you);  
 The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by  
     the great Secretaries,  
 On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly  
     with twined arms,  
 The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut  
     in the hold,  
 The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his  
     cattle,  
 As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice  
     by the jingling of loose change,  
 The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning  
     the roof, the masons are calling for mortar,  
 In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the  
     laborers;  
 Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is  
     gather'd, it is the fourth of the Seventh-month  
     (what salutes of cannon and small arms)!  
 Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the  
     mower mows, and the winter-grain falls in the  
     ground;  
 Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the  
     hole in the frozen surface,  
 The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter  
     strikes deep with his axe,  
 Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-  
     wood or pecan-trees,  
 Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or  
     through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or  
     through those of the Arkansas,  
 Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche  
     or Altamahaw,  
 Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and  
     great-grandsons around them,

In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and  
trappers after their day's sport,  
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,  
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their  
time,  
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young hus-  
band sleeps by his wife;  
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.



I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell  
are with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I  
translate into a new tongue.  
I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,  
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,  
I show that size is only development.  
Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?  
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one,  
and still pass on.  
I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic  
nourishing night!  
Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!  
Still nodding night—made naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-  
topt!  
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged  
with blue!  
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!  
Earth of the limpid grey of clouds brighter and clearer for  
my sake!  
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!  
Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give  
love!  
O unspeakable passionate love.



All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or  
woman,  
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have  
for each other,  
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until  
it becomes omnific,  
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.



I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of  
the stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand,  
and the egg of the wren,  
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest,  
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of  
heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all  
machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any  
statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of  
infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss,  
fruits, grains, esculent roots.  
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,

And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
But call anything back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,  
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my  
    approach,  
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd  
    bones,  
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold  
    shapes,  
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great mon-  
    sters lying low,  
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,  
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,  
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,  
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,  
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the  
    cliff.



The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he com-  
    plains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the  
    shadow'd wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I  
    love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.



## VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;  
When you, my son and my comrade, dropt at my side that  
day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a  
look I shall never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine, O boy, reach'd up as  
you lay on the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested  
battle,  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I  
made my way,  
Found you in death so cold, dear comrade, found your  
body, son of responding kisses (never again on  
earth responding),  
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool  
blew the moderate night-wind,  
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me  
the battle-field spreading,  
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent  
night,  
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long  
I gazed,  
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side  
leaning my chin in my hands,  
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you,  
dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,  
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you, my son and  
my soldier,  
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward  
stole,  
Vigil final for you, brave boy (I could not save you, swift  
was your death,  
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think  
we shall surely meet again),  
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the  
dawn appear'd,  
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his  
form,  
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head  
and carefully under feet,  
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son  
in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,

Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battlefield dim,  
Vigil for boy of responding kisses (never again on earth responding),  
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how  
as day brighten'd,  
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in  
his blanket,  
And buried him where he fell.

## FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES

Facing west from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of  
maternity, the land of migrations, look afar,  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost  
circled;  
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of  
Kashmere,  
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and  
the hero,  
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice  
islands,  
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wander'd,  
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
(But where is what I started for so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

## AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

### 1.

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you Pau-  
manok,  
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,  
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her cast-  
aways,  
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,  
Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter  
poems,

Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,  
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and  
all the land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to  
follow those slender windrows,  
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,  
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce left  
by the tide,  
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other  
side of me,  
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought  
of likenesses,  
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

2.

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women  
wreck'd,  
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,  
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and  
closer,  
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.  
O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my  
mouth,  
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil  
upon me I have not once had the least idea  
who or what I am,  
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands  
yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory  
signs and bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I  
have written,  
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand  
beneath.  
I perceive I have not really understood anything, not a  
single object, and that no man ever can,

Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me  
to dart upon me and sting me,  
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

3.

You oceans both, I close with you,  
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,  
knowing not why,  
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and  
all.

You friable shore with trails of débris,  
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,  
What is yours is mine, my father.

I too Paumanok,  
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and  
been wash'd on your shores,  
I too am but a trail of drift and débris,  
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast, my father,  
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me, my father,  
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the  
murmuring I envy.

4.

Ebb, ocean of life (the flow will return),  
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not  
me,  
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I  
touch you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down  
where we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,

(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling),  
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,  
Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting an-  
other,  
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,  
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid  
or soil,  
Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented  
and thrown,  
A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves  
floating, drifted at random,  
Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,  
Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-  
trumpets,  
We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence,  
spread out before you,  
You up there walking or sitting,  
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

## THE LAST INVOCATION

At the last, tenderly,  
From the walls of the powerful, fortified house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks—from the keep of the  
well-closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper  
Set ope the doors, O Soul!

Tenderly! be not impatient!  
(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh!  
Strong is your hold, O love.)

*Frederick Goddard Tuckerman*  
*1821-1873*

TWO SONNETS

'Young Silas Long, a carrier through these woods,  
Drove home one night in not the best of moods,  
Having just seen a drowned man flung ashore  
With a strange feather cap. And once before,  
When he was hauling seine in Southold Bay  
About this time of year, a seaman's corse  
Washed up, with such a cap and such a face,  
And it had brought misfortune on the place.  
Pondering he drove; when lo, across the way  
He saw, too late, that there a body lay,  
Felt the wheels tilt but could not stop his horse  
Or not at once, then—flinging with a slap  
The old cloth cover down he called a cap—  
Ran back, ten steps or more, and nothing found . . .

'Yes, the dead pines and deersfoot on the ground,—  
So quick returned again in five or six.  
His cap was gone and in its stead thrown down  
The very loon-skin the twice-drowned had on,  
With bits of seaweed sticking to the flix.  
So Long rode home, of cap and sense bereft,  
But still can show the dead man's that was left,  
And the webs crawl, he says, when the sea rolls.'  
Then he, having told his tale and said his say,  
By way of emphasis or corollary  
Spat a torpedo in the bed of coals.  
'And what, what, what,' squealed Ike, 'became of Long's?'  
But the old man here rose and reached the tongs,  
Laid fire to his pipe and phewed away.

I TASTE A LIQUOR  
NEVER BREWED

I taste a liquor never brewed  
From tankards scooped in pearl;  
Not all the vats upon the Rhine  
Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I,  
And debauchee of dew,  
Reeling through endless summer days  
From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee  
Out of the foxglove's door,  
When butterflies renounce their drams,  
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats,  
And saints to windows run,  
To see the little tippler  
Leaning against the sun!

I CANNOT LIVE  
WITH YOU

I cannot live with you,  
It would be life,  
And life is over there  
Behind the shelf

The sexton keeps the key to,  
Putting up  
Our life, his porcelain,  
Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife,  
Quaint or broken;  
A newer Sèvres pleases,  
Old ones crack.

I could not die with you,  
For one must wait  
To shut the other's gaze down,—  
You could not.



And I, could I stand by  
And see you freeze,  
Without my right of frost,  
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you,  
Because your face  
Would put out Jesus',  
That new grace

Glow plain and foreign  
On my homesick eye,  
Except that you, than he  
Shone closer by.

They'd judge us—how?  
For you served Heaven, you know,  
Or sought to;  
I could not,

Because you saturated sight,  
And I had no more eyes  
For sordid excellence  
As Paradise.

And were you lost, I would be,  
Though my name  
Rang loudest  
On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved,  
And I condemned to be  
Where you were not,  
That self were hell to me.

So we must keep apart,  
You there, I here,  
With just the door ajar  
That oceans are,  
And prayer,  
And that pale sustenance,  
Despair!

## REARRANGE A WIFE'S AFFECTION

Rearrange a wife's affection?  
When they dislocate my brain,  
Amputate my freckled bosom,  
Make me bearded like a man!

Blush, my spirit, in thy fastness,  
Blush, my unacknowledged clay,  
Seven years of troth have taught thee  
More than wifehood ever may!

Love that never leaped its socket,  
Trust entrenched in narrow pain,  
Constancy through fire awarded,  
Anguish bare of anodyne,

Burden borne so far triumphant  
None suspect me of the crown,  
For I wear the thorns till sunset,  
Then my diadem put on.

Big my secret, but it's bandaged,  
It will never get away  
Till the day its weary keeper  
Leads it through the grave to thee.

## GRIEF IS A MOUSE

Grief is a mouse,  
And chooses wainscot in the breast  
For his shy house,  
And baffles quest.

Grief is a thief,  
Quick startled, pricks his ear  
Report to hear of that vast dark  
That swept his being back.

Grief is a juggler,  
Boldest at the play,  
Lest if he flinch,  
The eye that way

Pounce on his bruises,  
One, say, or three.  
Grief is a gourmand,  
Span his luxury.

Best grief is tongueless—  
Before he'll tell,  
Burn him in the public square,  
His embers will,

Possibly. If they refuse  
How then know,  
Since a rack couldn't coax  
A syllable now.

### THE LIGHTNING IS A YELLOW FORK

The lightning is a yellow fork  
From tables in the sky  
By inadvertent fingers dropped,  
The awful cutlery

Of mansions never quite disclosed  
And never quite concealed,  
The apparatus of the dark  
To ignorance revealed.

### A WIFE AT DAYBREAK

A wife at daybreak I shall be;  
Sunrise, hast thou a flag for me?  
At midnight I am yet a maid—  
How short it takes to make it bride!  
Then, Midnight, I have passed from thee  
Unto the East and Victory.

Midnight, "Good night!"  
I hear them call.  
The Angels bustle in the hall,  
Softly my Future climbs the stair,  
I fumble at my childhood's prayer—  
So soon to be a child no more!  
Eternity, I'm coming, Sir,—  
Master, I've seen that face before.

FIVE LIVES

Five mites of monads dwelt in a round drop  
That twinkled on a leaf by a pool in the sun.  
To the naked eye they lived invisible;  
Specks, for a world of whom the empty shell  
Of a mustard-seed had been a hollow sky.

One was a meditative monad, called a sage;  
And, shrinking all his mind within, he thought:  
'Tradition, handed down for hours and hours,  
Tells that our globe, this quivering crystal world,  
Is slowly dying. What if, seconds hence,  
When I am very old, yon shimmering dome  
Come drawing down and down, till all things end?'  
Then with a weazen smirk he proudly felt  
No other mote of God had ever gained  
Such giant grasp of universal truth.

One was a transcendental monad; thin  
And long and slim in the mind; and thus he mused:  
'Oh, vast, unfathomable monad-souls!  
Made in the image'—a hoarse frog croaks from the pool—  
'Hark! 'twas some god, voicing his glorious thought  
In thunder music! Yea, we hear their voice,  
And we may guess their minds from ours, their work.  
Some taste they have like ours, some tendency  
To wriggle about, and munch a trace of scum.'  
He floated up on a pin-point bubble of gas  
That burst, pricked by the air, and he was gone.

One was a barren-minded monad, called  
A positivist; and he knew positively:  
'There is no world beyond this certain drop.  
Prove me another! Let the dreamers dream  
Of their faint dreams, and noises from without,  
And higher and lower; life is life enough.'  
Then swaggering half a hair's breadth, hungrily  
He seized upon an atom of bug, and fed.

One was a tattered monad, called a poet;  
And with shrill voice ecstatic thus he sang:  
'Oh, the little female monad's lips!  
Oh, the little female monad's eyes:  
Ah, the little, little, female, female monad!'

The last was a strong-minded monadess,  
Who dashed amid the infusoria,  
Danced high and low, and wildly spun and dove  
Till the dizzy others held their breath to see.

But while they led their wondrous little lives  
Aeonian moments had gone wheeling by,  
The burning drop had shrunk with fearful speed;  
A glistening film—'twas gone; the leaf was dry.  
The little ghost of an inaudible squeak  
Was lost to the frog that goggled from his stone;  
Who, at the huge, slow tread of a thoughtful ox  
Coming to drink, stirred sideways fatly, plunged,  
Launched backward twice, and all the pool was still.

THE REVENGE OF HAMISH

It was three slim does and a ten-tined buck in the bracken  
lay;

And all of a sudden the sinister smell of a man,  
Awaft on a wind-shift, wavered and ran  
Down the hill-side and sifted along through the bracken  
and passed that way.

Then Nan got a-tremble at nostril; she was the daintiest  
doe;

In the print of her velvet flank on the velvet fern  
She reared, and rounded her ears in turn.  
Then the buck leapt up, and his head as a king's to a  
crown did go

Full high in the breeze, and he stood as if Death had the  
form of a deer;

And the two slim does long lazily stretching arose,  
For their day-dream slower came to a close,  
Till they woke and were still, breath-bound with waiting  
and wonder and fear.

Then Alan the huntsman sprang over the hillock, the  
hounds shot by,

The does and the ten-tined buck made a marvellous  
bound,  
The hounds swept after with never a sound,  
But Alan loud winded his horn in sign that the quarry was  
nigh.

For at dawn of that day proud Maclean of Lochbuy to the  
hunt had waxed wild,

And he cursed at old Alan till Alan fared off with the  
hounds  
For to drive him the deer to the lower glen-grounds:  
'I will kill a red deer,' quoth Maclean, 'in the sight of the  
wife and the child.'

So gayly he paced with the wife and the child to his  
chosen stand;

But he hurried tall Hamish the henchman ahead: 'Go  
turn,'—

Cried Maclean—‘if the deer seek to cross to the burn,  
Do thou turn them to me: nor fail, lest thy back be red as  
thy hand.’

Now hard-fortuned Hamish, half blown of his breath with  
the height of the hill,  
Was white in the face when the ten-tined buck and the  
does  
Drew leaping to burn-ward; huskily rose  
His shouts, and his nether lip twitched, and his legs were  
o’er weak for his will.

So the deer darted lightly by Hamish and bounded away  
to the burn.  
But Maclean never bating his watch tarried waiting  
below.  
Still Hamish hung heavy with fear for to go  
All the space of an hour; then he went, and his face was  
greenish and stern,

And his eye sat back in the socket, and shrunken the eye-  
balls shone,  
As withdrawn from a vision of deeds it were shame to  
see.  
‘Now, now, grim henchman, what is’t with thee?’  
Brake Maclean, and his wrath rose red as a beacon the  
wind hath upblown.

‘Three does and a ten-tined buck made out,’ spoke  
Hamish, full mild,  
‘And I ran for to turn, but my breath it was blown, and  
they passed;  
I was weak, for ye called ere I broke me my fast.’  
Cried Maclean: ‘Now a ten-tined buck in the sight of the  
wife and the child

I had killed if the gluttonous kern had not wrought me a  
snail’s own wrong!’  
Then he sounded, and down came kinsmen and clans-  
men all:  
‘Ten blows, for ten tine, on his back let fall,  
And reckon no stroke if the blood follow not at the bite of  
thong!’

So Hamish made bare, and took him his strokes; at the last  
he smiled.



'Now I'll to the burn,' quoth Maclean, 'for it still may be,  
If a slimmer-paunched henchman will hurry with me,  
I shall kill me the ten-tined buck for a gift to the wife and  
the child!'

Then the clansmen departed, by this path and that; and  
over the hill  
Sped Maclean with an outward wrath for an inward  
shame;  
And that place of the lashing full quiet became;  
And the wife and the child stood sad; and bloody-backed  
Hamish sat still.

But look! red Hamish has risen; quick about and about  
turns he.  
'There is none betwixt me and the cragtop!' he screams  
under breath.  
Then, livid as Lazarus lately from death,  
He snatches the child from the mother, and clambers the  
crag toward the sea.

Now the mother drops breath; she is dumb, and her heart  
goes dead for a space,  
Till the motherhood, mistress of death, shrieks, shrieks  
through the glen,  
And that place of the lashing is live with men,  
And Maclean, and the gillie that told him, dash up in a  
desperate race.

Not a breath's time for asking; an eye-glance reveals all  
the tale untold.  
They follow mad Hamish afar up the crag toward the  
sea,  
And the lady cries: 'Clansmen, run for a fee!—  
Yon castle and lands to the two first hands that shall hook  
him and hold

Fast Hamish back from the brink!'—and ever she flies up  
the steep,  
And the clansmen pant, and they sweat, and they jostle  
and strain.  
But, mother, 'tis vain; but, father, 'tis vain;  
Stern Hamish stands bold on the brink, and dangles the  
child o'er the deep.

Now a faintness falls on the men that run, and they all  
stand still.

And the wife prays Hamish as if he were God, on her  
knees,

Crying: 'Hamish! O Hamish! but please, but please  
For to spare him!' and Hamish still dangles the child, with  
a wavering will.

On a sudden he turns; with a sea-hawk scream, and a  
gibe, and a song,

Cries: 'So; I will spare ye the child if, in sight of ye all,  
Ten blows on Maclean's bare back shall fall,  
And ye reckon no stroke if the blood follow not at the  
bite of the thong!'

Then Maclean he set hardly his tooth to his lip that his  
tooth was red,

Breathed short for a space, said: 'Nay, but it never  
shall be!

Let me hurl off the damnable hound in the sea!'  
But the wife: 'Can Hamish go fish us the child from the  
sea, if dead?

Say yea!—Let them lash *me*, Hamish?'—'Nay!'—'Husband,  
the lashing will heal;

But, oh, who will heal me the bonny sweet bairn in his  
grave?

Could ye cure me my heart with the death of a knave?  
Quick! Love! I will bare thee—so—kneel! Then Maclean  
'gan slowly to kneel

With never a word, till presently downward he jerked to  
the earth.

Then the henchman—he that smote Hamish—would  
tremble and lag;

'Strike, hard!' quoth Hamish, full stern, from the crag;  
Then he struck him, 'One!' sang Hamish, and danced with  
the child in his mirth.

And no man spake beside Hamish; he counted each stroke  
with a song.

When the last stroke fell, then he moved him a pace  
down the height,

And he held forth the child in the heart-aching sight  
Of the mother, and looked all pitiful grave, as repenting  
a wrong.

And there as the motherly arms stretched out with the  
thanksgiving prayer—

And there as the mother crept up with a fearful swift  
pace,

Till her finger nigh felt of the bairnie's face—

In a flash fierce Hamish turned round and lifted the child  
in the air,

And sprang with the child in his arms from the horrible  
height in the sea,

Shrill screeching, 'Revenge!' in the wind-rush; and  
pallid Maclean,

Age-feeble with anger and impotent pain,

Crawled up on the crag, and lay flat, and locked hold of  
dead roots of a tree—

And gazed hungrily o'er, and the blood from his back  
drip-dripped in the brine,

And a sea-hawk flung down a skeleton fish as he flew,

And the mother stared white on the waste of blue,

And the wind drove a cloud to seaward, and the sun  
began to shine.

THE MENAGERIE

Thank God my brain is not inclined to cut  
Such capers every day! I'm just about  
Mellow, but then—There goes the tentflap shut.  
Rain's in the wind. I thought so: every snout  
Was twitching when the keeper turned me out.

That screaming parrot makes my blood run cold.  
Gabriel's trump! the big bull elephant  
Squeals 'Rain!' to the parched herd. The monkeys scold,  
And jabber that it's rain water they want.  
(It makes me sick to see a monkey pant.)

I'll foot it home, to try and make believe  
I'm sober. After this I stick to beer,  
And drop the circus when the sane folks leave.  
A man's a fool to look at things too near:  
They look back, and begin to cut up queer.

Beasts do, at any rate; especially  
Wild devils caged. They have the coolest way  
Of being something else than what you see:  
You pass a sleek young zebra nosing hay,  
A nylghau looking bored and distinguished,—

And think you've seen a donkey and a bird.  
Not on your life! Just glance back, if you dare.  
The zebra chews, the nylghau hasn't stirred;  
But something's happened, Heaven knows what or where  
To freeze your scalp and pompadour your hair.

I'm not precisely an aeolian lute  
Hung in the wandering winds of sentiment,  
But drown me if the ugliest, meanest brute  
Grunting and fretting in that sultry tent  
Didn't just floor me with embarrassment!

'Twas like a thunder-clap from out of the clear,—  
One minute they were circus beasts, some grand,  
Some ugly, some amusing, and some queer:  
Rival attractions to the hobo band,  
The flying jenny, and the peanut stand.

Next minute they were old hearth-mates of mine!  
Lost people, eyeing me with such a stare!  
Patient, satiric, devilish, divine;  
A gaze of hopeless envy, squalid care,  
Hatred, and thwarted love, and dim despair.

Within my blood my ancient kindred spoke,—  
Grotesque and monstrous voices, heard afar  
Down ocean caves when behemoth awoke,  
Or through fern forests roared the plesiosaur  
Locked with the giant-bat in ghastly war.

And suddenly, as in a flash of light,  
I saw great Nature working out her plan;  
Through all her shapes from mastodon to mite  
Forever groping, testing, passing on  
To find at last the shape and soul of Man.

Till in the fullness of accomplished time  
Comes brother Forepaugh, upon business bent,  
Tracks her through frozen and through torrid clime,  
And shows us, neatly labeled in a tent,  
The stages of her huge experiment;

Blabbing aloud her shy and reticent hours;  
Dragging to light her blinking, slothful moods;  
Publishing fretful seasons when her powers  
Worked wild and sullen in her solitudes,  
Or when her mordant laughter shook the woods.

Here, round about me, were her vagrant births;  
Sick dreams she had, fierce projects she essayed;  
Her qualms, her fiery prides, her crazy mirths;  
The troublings of her spirit as she strayed,  
Cringed, gloated, mocked, was lordly, was afraid,

On that long road she went to seek mankind;  
Here were the darkling coverts that she beat  
To find the Hider she was sent to find;  
Here the distracted footprints of her feet  
Whereby her soul's Desire she came to greet.

But why should they, her botch-work, turn about  
And stare disdain at me, her finished job?  
Why was the place one vast suspended shout  
Of laughter? Why did all the daylight throb  
With soundless guffaw and dumb-stricken sob?

Helpless I stood among those awful cages;  
The beasts were walking loose, and I was bagged!  
I, I, last product of the toiling ages,  
Goal of heroic feet that never lagged,—  
A little man in trousers, slightly jaggged.

Deliver me from such another jury!  
The Judgment Day will be a picnic to't.  
Their satire was more dreadful than their fury,  
And worst of all was just a kind of brute  
Disgust, and giving up, and sinking mute.

Survival of the fittest, adaptation,  
And all their other evolution terms,  
Seem to omit one small consideration,  
To wit, that tumblebugs and angleworms  
Have souls: there's soul in everything that squirms.

And souls are restless, plagued, impatient things,  
All dream and unaccountable desire;  
Crawling, but pestered with the thought of wings;  
Spreading through every inch of earth's old mire  
Mystical hanker after something higher.

Wishes *are* horses, as I understand.  
I guess a wistful polyp that has strokes  
Of feeling faint to gallivant on land  
Will come to be a scandal to his folks;  
Legs he will sprout, in spite of threats and jokes.

And at the core of every life that crawls,  
Or runs or flies or swims or vegetates—  
Churning the mammoth's heart-blood, in the galls  
Of shark and tiger planting gorgeous hates,  
Lighting the love of eagles for their mates;

Yes, in the dim brain of the jellied fish  
That is and is not living—moved and stirred  
From the beginning a mysterious wish,  
A vision, a command, a fatal Word:  
The name of Man was uttered, and they heard.

Upward along the aeons of old war  
They sought him: wing and shank-bone, claw and bill  
Were fashioned and rejected; wide and far  
They roamed the twilight jungles of their will;  
But still they sought him, and desired him still.

Man they desired, but mind you, Perfect Man,  
The radiant and the loving, yet to bel  
I hardly wonder, when they came to scan  
The upshot of their strenuosity,  
They gazed with mixed emotions upon *me*.

Well, my advice to you is, Face the creatures,  
Or spot them sideways with your weather eye,  
Just to keep tab on their expansive features;  
It isn't pleasant when you're stepping high  
To catch a giraffe smiling on the sly.

If nature made you graceful, don't get gay  
Back-to before the hippopotamus;  
If meek and godly, find some place to play  
Besides right where three mad hyenas fuss:  
You may hear language that we won't discuss

If you're a sweet thing in a flower-bed hat,  
Or her best fellow with your tie tucked in,  
Don't squander love's bright springtime girding at  
An old chimpanzee with an Irish chin:  
*There may be hidden meaning in his grin.*



*Anonymous*

## FINNIGAN'S WAKE

Irish-American Vaudeville Tune, c. 1870

Tim Finnigan lived in Walker Street  
An Irish gentleman mighty odd;  
He'd a beautiful brogue so rich and sweet,  
And to rise in the world he carried the hod.  
But you see, he'd a sort of tippling way,  
For the love of the liquor poor Tim was born;  
And to help him on his work each day,  
He'd a drop of the craythur every morn.

*With my philalloo, hubbaboo, whack hurroo, boys,  
Didn't we sing till our jaws did ache,  
And shout and laugh and drink and sing,  
Oh it's lots of fun at Finnigan's wake.*

One morning Tim was rather full,  
His head felt heavy, which made him shake,  
He fell from the ladder and broke his skull,  
So they carried him home, himself to wake.  
They tied him up in a nice clean sheet,  
And laid him out upon the bed,  
Wid a gallon of whiskey at his feet,  
And a barrel of praties at his head.

*With my philalloo, hubbaboo, whack hurroo, boys,  
Didn't we sing till our jaws did ache,  
And shout and laugh and drink and sing,  
Oh it's lots of fun at Finnigan's wake.*

His friends assembled at the wake  
Miss Finnigan call'd out for the lunch,  
First they brought in tay and cake,  
Then pipes, tobacco, and whiskey punch;  
Biddy O'Brine began to cry,  
Such a pretty corpse she never did see,  
Arrah Tim Mavourneen why did you die?  
"Ahl! hould your gab," said Paddy McGree.

*With my philalloo, hubbaboo, whack hurroo, boys,  
Didn't we sing till our jaws did ache,  
And shout and laugh and drink and sing,  
Oh it's lots of fun at Finnigan's wake.*

Then Peggy O'Connor tuck up the job,  
"Biddy," says she, "you're wrong, I'm sure,"  
But Biddy gave her a pelt in the gob,  
And we left her sprawling on the flure;  
Oh! then the war did soon engage!  
'Twas woman to woman, and man to man,  
Shillelagh law did soon engage!  
And a row and a ruction soon began.

*With my philalloo, hubbaboo, whack hurroo, boys,  
Didn't we sing till our jaws did ache,  
And shout and laugh and drink and sing,  
Oh it's lots of fun at Finnigan's wake.*

Then Mickey Mollaney raised his head,  
When a gallon of whiskey flew at him,  
It missed, an' falling on the bed,  
The liquor scatter'd over Tim;  
Be-dad he revives, see how he rises,  
And Timothy, rising from the bed,  
Saying, "Whirl your liquor round like blazes!  
Arrah! Gudaguddug, do you think I'm dead?"

*With my philalloo, hubbaboo, whack hurroo, boys,  
Didn't we sing till our jaws did ache,  
And shout and laugh and drink and sing,  
Oh it's lots of fun at Finnigan's wake.*

EROS TURANNOS

She fears him, and will always ask  
    What fated her to choose him;  
She meets in his engaging mask  
    All reasons to refuse him;  
But what she meets and what she fears  
Are less than are the downward years,  
Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs  
    Of age, were she to lose him.

Between a blurred sagacity  
    That once had power to sound him,  
And Love, that will not let him be  
    The Judas that she found him,  
Her pride assuages her almost,  
As if it were alone the cost.—  
He sees that he will not be lost,  
    And waits and looks around him.

A sense of ocean and old trees  
    Envelops and allures him;  
Tradition, touching all he sees,  
    Beguiles and reassures him;  
And all her doubts of what he says  
Are dimmed with what she knows of days—  
Till even prejudice delays  
    And fades, and she secures him.

The falling leaf inaugurates  
    The reign of her confusion;  
The pounding wave reverberates  
    The dirge of her illusion;  
And home, where passion lived and died,  
Becomes a place where she can hide,  
While all the town and harbor side  
    Vibrate with her seclusion.

We tell you, tapping on our brows,  
    The story as it should be,—  
As if the story of a house  
    Were told, or ever could be;  
We'll have no kindly veil between

Her visions and those we have seen,—  
As if we guessed what hers have been,  
Or what they are or would be.

Meanwhile we do no harm; for they  
That with a god have striven,  
Not hearing much of what we say,  
Take what the god has given;  
Though like waves breaking it may be,  
Or like a changed familiar tree,  
Or like a stairway to the sea  
Where down the blind are driven.

### MANY ARE CALLED

The Lord Apollo, who has never died,  
Still holds alone his immemorial reign,  
Supreme in an impregnable domain  
That with his magic he has fortified;  
And though melodious multitudes have tried  
In ecstasy, in anguish, and in vain,  
With invocation sacred and profane  
To lure him, even the loudest are outside.

Only at un conjectured intervals,  
By will of him on whom no man may gaze,  
By word of him whose law no man has read,  
A questing light may rift the sullen walls,  
To cling where mostly its infrequent rays  
Fall golden on the patience of the dead.

WAR IS KIND

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.  
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky  
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,  
Do not weep.  
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,  
Little souls who thirst for fight,  
These men were born to drill and die.  
The unexplained glory flies above them,  
Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom—  
A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.  
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,  
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,  
Do not weep.  
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,  
Eagle with crest of red and gold,  
These men were born to drill and die.  
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,  
Make plain to them the excellence of killing  
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button  
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,  
Do not weep.  
War is kind.

*Gertrude Stein, 1874-1946*

STANZAS IN MEDITATION VI  
(1940)

Why am I if I am uncertain reasons may inclose.  
Remain remain propose repose chose.  
I call carelessly that the door is open  
Which if they can refuse to open  
No one can rush to close.  
Let them be mine therefor.  
Everybody knows that I chose.  
Therefor if therefor before I close.  
I will therefor offer therefor I offer this.  
Which if I refuse to miss can be miss is mine.  
I will be well welcome when I come.  
Because I am coming.  
Certainly I come having come.

These stanzas are done.

*Robert Frost, 1875-*

AFTER APPLE-PICKING

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree  
Toward heaven still,  
And there's the barrel that I didn't fill  
Beside it, and there may be two or three  
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.  
But I am done with apple-picking now.  
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,  
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.  
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight  
I got from looking through a pane of glass  
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough  
And held against the world of hoary grass.  
It melted, and I let it fall and break.  
But I was well  
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,  
And I could tell  
What form my dreaming was about to take.  
Magnified apples appear and disappear,  
Stem end and blossom end,  
And every fleck of russet showing clear.  
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,  
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.  
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.  
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin  
The rumbling sound  
Of load on load of apples coming in.  
For I have had too much  
Of apple-picking: I am overtired  
Of the great harvest I myself desired.  
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,  
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.  
For all  
That struck the earth,  
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,  
Went surely to the cider-apple heap  
As of no worth.  
One can see what will trouble  
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.  
Were he not gone,  
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his  
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,  
Or just some human sleep.



## THE BLACK COTTAGE

We chanced in passing by that afternoon  
To catch it in a sort of special picture  
Among tar-banded ancient cherry trees,  
So well back from the road in rank lodged grass,  
The little cottage we were speaking of,  
A front with just a door between two windows,  
Fresh painted by the shower a velvet black.  
We paused, the minister and I, to look.  
He made as if to hold it at arm's length  
Or put the leaves aside that framed it in.  
'Pretty,' he said. 'Come in. No one will care.'  
The path was a vague parting in the grass  
That led us to a weathered window-sill.  
We pressed our faces to the pane. 'You see,' he said,  
'Everything's as she left it when she died.  
Her sons won't sell the house or the things in it.  
They say they mean to come and summer here  
Where they were boys. They haven't come this year.  
They live so far away—one is out west—  
It will be hard for them to keep their word.  
Anyway they won't have the place disturbed.'  
A buttoned hair-cloth lounge spread scrolling arms  
Under a crayon portrait on the wall,  
Done sadly from an old daguerreotype.  
'That was the father as he went to war.  
She always, when she talked about the war,  
Sooner or later came and leaned, half knelt  
Against the lounge beside it, though I doubt  
If such unlikeliest lines kept power to stir  
Anything in her after all the years.  
He fell at Gettysburg or Fredericksburg,  
I ought to know—it makes a difference which:  
Fredericksburg wasn't Gettysburg, of course.  
But what I'm getting to is how forsaken  
A little cottage this has always seemed;  
Since she went more than ever, but before—  
I don't mean altogether by the lives  
That had gone out of it, the father first,  
Then the two sons, till she was left alone.  
(Nothing could draw her after those two sons.  
She valued the considerate neglect  
She had at some cost taught them after years.)  
I mean by the world's having passed it by—  
As we almost got by this afternoon.

It always seems to me a sort of mark  
To measure how far fifty years have brought us.  
Why not sit down if you are in no haste?  
These doorsteps seldom have a visitor.  
The warping boards pull out their own old nails  
With none to tread and put them in their place.  
She had her own idea of things, the old lady.  
And she liked to talk. She had seen Garrison  
And Whittier, and had her story of them.  
One wasn't long in learning that she thought  
Whatever else the Civil War was for,  
It wasn't just to keep the States together,  
Nor just to free the slaves, though it did both.  
She wouldn't have believed those ends enough  
To have given outright for them all she gave.  
Her giving somehow touched the principle  
That all men are created free and equal.  
And to hear her quaint phrases—so removed  
From the world's view to-day of all those things.  
That's a hard mystery of Jefferson's.  
What did he mean? Of course the easy way  
Is to decide it simply isn't true.  
It may not be. I heard a fellow say so.  
But never mind, the Welshman got it planted  
Where it will trouble us a thousand years.  
Each age will have to reconsider it.  
You couldn't tell her what the West was saying,  
And what the South to her serene belief.  
She had some art of hearing and yet not  
Hearing the latter wisdom of the world.  
White was the only race she ever knew.  
Black she had scarcely seen, and yellow never.  
But how could they be made so very unlike  
By the same hand working the same stuff?  
She had supposed the war decided that.  
What are you going to do with such a person?  
Strange how such innocence gets its own way.  
I shouldn't be surprised if in this world  
It were the force that would at last prevail.  
Do you know but for her there was a time  
When to please the younger members of the church,  
Or rather say non-members in the church,  
Whom we all have to think of nowadays,  
I would have changed the Creed a very little?  
Not that she ever had to ask me not to;  
It never got so far as that; but the bare thought

Of her old tremulous bonnet in the pew,  
And of her half asleep was too much for me.  
Why, I might wake her up and startle her.  
It was the words "descended into Hades"  
That seemed too pagan to our liberal youth.  
You know they suffered from a general onslaught.  
And well, if they weren't true why keep right on  
Saying them like the heathen? We could drop them.  
Only—there was the bonnet in the pew.  
Such a phrase couldn't have meant much to her.  
But suppose she had missed it from the Creed  
As a child misses the unsaid Good-night,  
And falls asleep with heartache—how should I feel?  
I'm just as glad she made me keep hands off,  
For, dear me, why abandon a belief  
Merely because it ceases to be true.  
Cling to it long enough, and not a doubt  
It will turn true again, for so it goes.  
Most of the change we think we see in life  
Is due to truths being in and out of favour.  
As I sit here, and oftentimes, I wish  
I could be monarch of a desert land  
I could devote and dedicate forever  
To the truths we keep coming back and back to.  
So desert it would have to be, so walled  
By mountain ranges half in summer snow,  
No one would covet it or think it worth  
The pains of conquering to force change on.  
Scattered oases where men dwelt, but mostly  
Sand dunes held loosely in tamarisk  
Blown over and over themselves in idleness.  
Sand grains should sugar in the natal dew  
The babe born to the desert, the sand storm  
Retard mid-waste my cowering caravans—  
There are bees in this wall. He struck the clapboards,  
Fierce heads looked out; small bodies pivoted.  
We rose to go. Sunset blazed on the windows.

## TO EARTHWARD

Love at the lips was touch  
As sweet as I could bear;  
And once that seemed too much;  
I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things,  
The flow of—was it musk  
From hidden grapevine springs  
Down hill at dusk?

I had the swirl and ache  
From sprays of honeysuckle  
That when they're gathered shake  
Dew on the knuckle.

I craved strong sweets, but those  
Seemed strong when I was young;  
The petal of the rose  
It was that stung.

Now no joy but lacks salt  
That is not dashed with pain  
And weariness and fault;  
I crave the stain

Of tears, the aftermark  
Of almost too much love,  
The sweet of bitter bark  
And burning clove.

When stiff and sore and scarred  
I take away my hand  
From leaning on it hard  
In grass and sand,

The hurt is not enough:  
I long for weight and strength  
To feel the earth as rough  
To all my length.

#### DEPARTMENTAL

An ant on the table cloth  
Ran into a dormant moth  
Of many times his size.  
He showed not the least surprise.  
His business wasn't with such.  
He gave it scarcely a touch,  
And was off on his duty run.  
Yet if he encountered one  
Of the hive's enquiry squad  
Whose work is to find out God

And the nature of time and space,  
He would put him onto the case.  
Ants are a curious race;  
One crossing with hurried tread  
The body of one of their dead  
Isn't given a moment's arrest—  
Seems not even impressed.  
But he no doubt reports to any  
With whom he crosses antennae,  
And they no doubt report  
To the higher up at court.  
Then word goes forth in Formic:  
'Death's come to Jerry McCormic,  
Our selfless forager Jerry.  
Will the special Janizary  
Whose office it is to bury  
The dead of the commissary  
Go bring him home to his people.  
Lay him in state on a sepal.  
Wrap him for shroud in a petal.  
Embalm him with ichor of nettle.  
This is the word of your Queen.'  
And presently on the scene  
Appears a solemn mortician;  
And taking formal position  
With feelers calmly atwiddle,  
Seizes the dead by the middle,  
And heaving him high in air,  
Carries him out of there.  
No one stands round to stare.  
It is nobody else's affair.

It couldn't be called ungentle.  
But how thorough departmental.

*Anonymous*

COCAINE LIL

Chicago-Detroit, late Nineteenth Century

Did you ever hear about Cocaine Lil?  
She lived in Cocaine town on Cocaine hill,  
She had a cocaine dog and a cocaine cat,  
They fought all night with the cocaine rat.

She had cocaine hair on her cocaine head.  
She wore a snow-bird hat and sleigh-riding clothes.  
She had a cocaine dress that was poppy red.  
On her coat she wore a crimson, cocaine rose.

Big gold chariots on the Milky Way,  
Snakes and elephants silver and gray,  
O the cocaine blues they make me sad,  
O the cocaine blues make me feel bad.

Lil went to a "snow" party one cold night,  
And the way she "sniffed" was sure a fright.  
There was Hophead Mag with Dopey Slim,  
Kankakee Liz with Yen Shee Jim.

There was Hasheesh Nell and the Poppy Face Kid,  
Climbed up snow ladders and down they slid;  
There was Stepladder Kit, he stood six feet,  
And the Sleighriding Sisters that are hard to beat.

Along in the morning about half-past three  
They were all lit up like a Christmas tree;  
Lil got home and started to go to bed,  
Took another "sniff" and it knocked her dead.

They laid her out in her cocaine clothes.  
She wore a snow-bird hat and a crimson rose;  
On her headstone you'll find this refrain:  
"She died as she lived, sniffing cocaine."

*Carl Sandburg, 1878-*

## CABOOSE THOUGHTS

It's going to come out all right—do you know?  
The sun, the birds, the grass—they know.  
They get along—and we'll get along.

Some days will be rainy and you will sit waiting  
And the letter you wait for won't come,  
And I will sit watching the sky tear off grey and grey  
And the letter I wait for won't come.

There will be ac-ci-dents.  
I know ac-ci-dents are coming.  
Smash-ups, signals wrong, washouts, trestles rotten,  
Red and yellow ac-ci-dents.  
But somehow and somewhere the end of the run  
The train gets put together again  
And the caboose and the green tail lights  
Fade down the right of way like a new white hope.

I never heard a mocking-bird in Kentucky  
Spilling its heart in the morning.

I never saw the snow on Chimborazo.  
It's a high white Mexican hat, I hear.

I never had supper with Abe Lincoln.  
Nor a dish of soup with Jim Hill.

But I've been around.  
I know some of the boys who can go a little.  
I know girls good for a burst of speed any time.

I heard Williams and Walker  
Before Walker died in the bughouse.

I knew a mandolin player  
Working in a barber shop in an Indiana town,  
And he thought he had a million dollars.



I knew a hotel girl in Des Moines.  
She had eyes; I saw her and said to myself  
The sun rises and the sun sets in her eyes.  
I was her steady and her heart went pit-a-pat.  
We took away the money for a prize waltz at a Brother-  
hood dance.  
She had eyes; she was safe as the bridge over the Missis-  
sippi at Burlington, I married her.

Last summer we took the cushions going west.  
Pike's Peak is a big old stone, believe me.  
It's fastened down; something you can count on.  
It's going to come out all right—do you know?  
The sun, the birds, the grass—they know.  
They get along—and we'll get along.

### SINGING NIGGER

Your bony head, Jazbo, O dock walloper,  
Those grappling hooks, those wheelbarrow handlers,  
The dome and the wings of you, nigger,  
The red roof and the door of you,  
I know where your songs came from.  
I knew why God listens to your, "Walk All Over God's  
Heaven."  
I heard you shooting craps, "My baby's going to have a  
new dress."  
I heard you in the cinders, "I'm going to live anyhow until  
I die."  
I saw five of you with a can of beer on a summer night  
and I listened to the five of you harmonizing six  
ways to sing, "Way Down Yonder in the Corn-  
field."  
I went away asking where I come from.

GENERAL WILLIAM BOOTH ENTERS  
INTO HEAVEN

*(To be sung to the tune of 'The Blood of the Lamb' with  
indicated instrument.)*

1.

*(Bass drum beaten loudly.)*

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum—  
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
The Saints smiled gravely and they said: 'He's Come.'  
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,  
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,  
Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale—  
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail:—  
Vermin-eaten saints with moldy breath,  
Unwashed legions with the ways of Death—  
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

*(Banjos.)*

Every slum had sent its half-a-score  
The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)  
Every banner that the wide world flies  
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.  
Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang,  
Tranced, fanatical they shrieked and sang:—  
'Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?'  
Hallelujah! It was queer to see  
Bull-necked convicts with that land make free.  
Loons with trumpets blowed a blare, blare, blare  
On, on upward thro' the golden air!  
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

2.

*(Bass drum slower and softer.)*

Booth died blind and still by faith he trod,  
Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God.  
Booth led boldly, and he looked the chief  
Eagle countenance in sharp relief,  
Beard a-flying, air of high command  
Unabated in that holy land.

*(Sweet flute music.)*

Jesus came from out the court-house door,  
Stretched his hands above the passing poor.  
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there  
Round and round the mighty court-house square.  
Then, in an instant all that blear review  
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new.  
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled  
And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world.

*(Bass drum louder.)*

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!  
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl!  
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,  
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

*(Grand chorus of all instruments. Tambourines to the foreground.)*

The hosts were sandalled, and their wings were fire!  
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir.  
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)  
Oh, shout Salvation! It was good to see  
Kings and Princes by the Lamb set free.  
The banjos rattled and the tambourines  
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens.

*(Reverently sung, no instruments.)*

And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer  
He saw his Master thro' the flag-filled air.  
Christ came gently with a robe and crown  
For Booth the soldier, while the throng knelt down.  
He saw King Jesus. They were face to face,  
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.  
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

*Anonymous*

THE GILA MONSTER ROUTE

Hobo Song of the South West

The lingering sunset across the plain  
Kissed the rear end of an east-bound train,  
And shone on a rusty track close by  
Where a ding-bat sat on a rotten tie.

He was ditched by the shack by cruel fate.  
The con high-balled, and the manifest freight  
Pulled out on the stem behind the mail,  
And she hit the ball on a sanded rail

As she pulled away in the fading night  
He could see the gleam of her red tail-light.  
Then the moon rose and the stars came out:  
He was ditched on the Gila Monster Route.

Nothing in sight but sand and space;  
No chance for a 'bo to feed his face;  
Not even a house to beg for a lump,  
Not a hen-house there to frisk for a gump.

He gazed far out in the solitude.  
He dropped his head and began to brood;  
He thought of the time he had lost his mate  
In a hostile burg on the Nickel Plate.

They had piped the stem and threw their feet  
And speared four-bits for something to eat,  
But deprived themselves of daily bread  
By sluffing their coin for dago red.

Down by the track in jungle's glade,  
In the cool green grass, in the tula's shade,  
They shed their coats and ditched their shoes  
And tanked up full on that colored booze.

Then they took a flop with their hides plum full  
And they did not hear the harness bull  
Till he shook them out of their boozy nap  
With a husky voice and a loaded sap.

They were charged with vag for they had no kale,  
And the judge said, "Sixty days in jail."  
But the john had a bindle—a workers' plea—  
So they gave him a floater and set him free.

They had turned him out but ditched his mate,  
So he glommed the guts of an east-bound freight.  
He had held his form to a rusty rod  
Till he heard the shack say, "Hit the sod!"

The john rolled off, he was in the ditch  
With two switch lamps and a rusty switch—  
A poor old seedy half-starved 'bo  
On a hostile pike without a show.

From away off somewhere in the dark  
Came the sharp, short notes of a coyote's bark.  
That 'bo looked round and quickly rose  
And shook the dust from his threadbare clothes.

Far off in the west in the moonlit night  
He saw the gleam of a big head-light—  
An east-bound stock-run hummed the rail,  
It was due at the switch to clear the mail.

As it pulled up close, the head-end shack  
Threw the switch to the passing track.  
The stock rolled in, and off the main.  
The line was clear for the west-bound train.

As she hove in sight far up the track  
She was working steam, with her brake-shoes slack;  
She whistled once at the whistling-post,  
Then she flittered by like a frightened ghost.

He could hear the roar of the big six-wheel  
As the drivers pounded the polished steel,  
And the screech of the flanges on the rail  
As she beat it west up the desert trail.

The john got busy and took the risk,  
He climbed aboard and began to frisk,  
He reached up high and began to feel  
For the end-door pin—then he cracked the seal.

'Twas a double-decker loaded with sheep.  
Old john crawled in and went to sleep.  
The con high-balled, and she whistled out—  
They were off, down the Gila Monster Route.

*Wallace Stevens, 1879-1955*

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING  
AT A BLACKBIRD

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,  
Like a tree  
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.  
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman  
Are one.  
A man and a woman and a blackbird  
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendoes,  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window  
With barbaric glass.  
The shadow of the blackbird  
Crossed it, to and fro.  
The mood  
Traced in the shadow  
An indecipherable cause.

## VII

O thin men of Haddam,  
Why do you imagine golden birds?  
Do you not see how the blackbird  
Walks around the feet  
Of the women about you?

## VIII

I know noble accents  
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
But I know, too,  
That the blackbird is involved  
In what I know.

## IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,  
It marked the edge  
Of one of many circles.

## X

At the sight of blackbirds  
Flying in a green light,  
Even the bawds of euphony  
Would cry out sharply.

## XI

He rode over Connecticut  
In a glass coach.  
Once, a fear pierced him,  
In that he mistook  
The shadow of his equipage  
For blackbirds.

## XII

The river is moving.  
The blackbirds must be flying.

## XIII

It was evening all afternoon.  
It was snowing



And it was going to snow.  
The blackbird sat  
In the cedar-limbs.

## IT MUST BE ABSTRACT

I am the spouse. She took her necklace off  
And laid it in the sand. As I am, I am  
The spouse. She opened her stone-studded belt.

I am the spouse, divested of bright gold,  
The spouse beyond emerald or amethyst,  
Beyond the burning body that I bear.

I am the woman stripped more nakedly  
Than nakedness, standing before an inflexible  
Order, saying I am the contemplated spouse.

Speak to me that, which spoken, will array me  
In its own only precious ornament.  
Set on me the spirit's diamond coronal.

Clothe me entire in the final filament,  
So that I tremble with such love so known  
And myself am precious for your perfecting.

HOW STRANGE YOU ARE

From *Paterson*

How strange you are, you idiot!  
So you think because the rose  
Is red that you shall have the mastery?  
The rose is green and will bloom,  
overtopping you, green, livid  
green when you shall no more speak, or  
taste, or even be. My whole life  
has hung too long upon a partial victory.

But, creature of the weather, I  
don't want to go any faster than  
I have to go to win.

Music it for yourself.

He picked a hairpin from the floor  
and stuck it in his ear, probing  
around inside—

The melting snow  
dripped from the cornice of his window  
90 strokes a minute—

He descried  
in the linoleum at his feet a woman's  
face, smelled his hands,

strong of a lotion he had used  
not long since, lavender,  
rolled his thumb

about the tip of his left index finger  
and watched it dip each time,  
like the head

of a cat licking its paw, heard the  
faint filing sound it made: of  
earth his ears are full, there is no sound

: And his thoughts soared  
to the magnificence of imagined delights  
where he would probe

as into the pupil of an eye  
as through a hoople of fire, and emerge  
sheathed in a robe

streaming with light. What heroic  
dawn of desire  
is denied to his thoughts?

They are trees  
from whose leaves streaming with rain  
his mind drinks of desire.

## TRACT

I will teach you my townspeople  
how to perform a funeral—  
for you have it over a troop  
of artists—  
unless one should scour the world—  
you have the ground sense necessary.

See! the hearse leads.  
I begin with a design for a hearse.  
For Christ's sake not black—  
nor white either—and not polished!  
Let it be weathered—like a farm wagon—  
with gilt wheels (this could be  
applied fresh with small expense)  
or no wheels at all:  
a rough dray to drag over the ground.

Knock the glass out!  
My God—glass, my townspeople!  
For what purpose? Is it for the dead  
to look out for us to see  
how well he is housed or to see  
the flowers or the lack of them—  
or what?

To keep the rain and snow from him?  
He will have a heavier rain soon:  
pebbles and dirt and what not.  
Let there be no glass—  
and no upholstery! phew!  
and no little brass rollers  
and small easy wheels on the bottom—

my townspeople what are you thinking of!  
A rough plain hearse then  
with gilt wheels and no top at all.  
On this the coffin lies  
by its own weight.

No wreaths please—  
especially no hot-house flowers!  
Some common memento is better,  
something he prized and is known by:  
his old clothes—a few books perhaps—  
God knows what! You realize  
how we are about these things,  
my townspeople—  
something will be found—anything—  
even flowers if he had come to that.  
So much for the hearse.

For heaven's sake though see to the driver!  
Take off the silk hat! In fact  
that's no place at all for him  
up there unceremoniously  
dragging our friend out to his own dignity!  
Bring him down—bring him down!  
Low and inconspicuous! I'd not have him ride  
on the wagon at all—damn him—  
the undertaker's understrapper!  
Let him hold the reins  
and walk at the side  
and inconspicuously too!

Then briefly as to yourselves:  
Walk behind—as they do in France,  
seventh class, or, if you ride,  
Hell take curtains! Go with some show  
of inconvenience; sit openly—  
to the weather as to grief.  
Or do you think you can shut grief in?  
What—from us? We who have perhaps  
nothing to lose? Share with us  
share with us—it will be money  
in your pockets.

Go now  
I think you are ready.

DEMON LOVERS

The peacock and the mocking-bird  
Cry forever in her breast;  
Public libraries have blurred  
The pages of his palimpsest.

He wanders lonely as a cloud  
In chevelure of curled perruque;  
Masked assassins in a crowd  
Strangle the uxorious duke.

Castilian facing Lucifer,  
Juan does not remove his cap;  
Unswaddled infantile to her  
His soul lies kicking in her lap.

While she, transported by the wind,  
Mercutio has clasped and kissed . . . .  
Like quicksilver, her absent mind  
Evades them both, and is not missed.

THE PURITAN'S BALLAD

My love came up from Barnegat,  
The sea was in his eyes;  
He trod as softly as a cat  
And told me terrible lies.

His hair was yellow as new-cut pine  
In shavings curled and feathered;  
I thought how silver it would shine  
By cruel winters weathered.

But he was in his twentieth year,  
This time I'm speaking of;  
We were head over heels in love with fear  
And half a-feared of love.

His feet were used to treading a gale  
And balancing thereon;  
His face was brown as a foreign sail  
Threadbare against the sun.

His arms were thick as hickory logs  
Whittled to little wrists;  
Strong as the teeth of terrier dogs  
Were the fingers of his fists.

Within his arms I feared to sink  
Where lions shook their manes,  
And dragons drawn in azure ink  
Leapt quickened by his veins.

Dreadful his strength and length of limb  
As the sea to foundering ships;  
I dipped my hands in love for him  
No deeper than their tips.

But our palms were welded by a flame  
The moment we came to part,  
And on his knuckles I read my name  
Enscrolled within a heart.

And something made our wills to bend  
As wild as trees blown over;  
We were no longer friend and friend,  
But only lover and lover.

"In seven weeks or seventy years—  
God grant it may be sooner!—  
I'll make a handkerchief for your tears  
From the sails of my captain's schooner.

"We'll wear our loves like wedding rings  
Long polished to our touch;  
We shall be busy with other things  
And they cannot bother us much.

"When you are skimming the wrinkled cream  
And your ring clinks on the pan,  
You'll say to yourself in a pensive dream,  
'How wonderful a man!'

"When I am slitting a fish's head  
And my ring clanks on the knife,  
I'll say with thanks, as a prayer is said,  
'How beautiful a wife!'

“And I shall fold my decorous paws  
In velvet smooth and deep,  
Like a kitten that covers up its claws  
To sleep and sleep and sleep.

“Like a little blue pigeon you shall bow  
Your bright alarming crest;  
In the crook of my arm you’ll lay your brow  
To rest and rest and rest.”

*Will he never come back from Barnegat  
With thunder in his eyes,  
Treading as soft as a tiger cat,  
To tell me terrible lies?*



*Ezra Pound, 1885-*

LYRICS

From *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*

E. P. ODE POUR L'ELECTION DE SON SEPULCHRE

For three years, out of key with his time,  
He strove to resuscitate the dead art  
Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"  
In the old sense. Wrong from the start—

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born  
In a half-savage country, out of date;  
Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;  
Capaneus; trout for factitious bait;

"Ἰδμεν γάρ τοι πάνθ', ὅσ' ἐνὶ Τροίῃ  
Caught in the unstopped ear;  
Giving the rocks small lee-way  
The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,  
He fished by obstinate isles;  
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair  
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.

Unaffected by "the march of events,"  
He passed from men's memory in *l'an trentiesme*  
*De son eage*; the case presents  
No adjunct to the Muses' diadem.

II

The age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace,  
Something for the modern stage,  
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries  
Of the inward gaze;  
Better mendacities  
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,  
Made with no loss of time,  
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster  
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.

### III

The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.  
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,  
The pianola "replaces"  
Sappho's barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus  
Phallic and ambrosial  
Made way for macerations;  
Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing,  
Sage Heraclitus says;  
But a tawdry cheapness  
Shall outlast our days.

Even the Christian beauty  
Defects—after Samothrace;  
We see τὸ καλὸν  
Decreed in the market-place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,  
Nor the saint's vision.  
We have the press for wafer;  
Franchise for circumcision.

All men, in law, are equals.  
Free of Pisistratus,  
We choose a knave or an eunuch  
To rule over us.

O bright Apollo,  
τίν' ἄνδρα, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα θεόν,  
What god, man, or hero  
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

### IV

These fought in any case,  
and some believing,  
pro domo, in any case . . .

Some quick to arm,  
some for adventure,  
some from fear of weakness,  
some from fear of censure,  
some for love of slaughter, in imagination,  
learning later . . .  
some in fear, learning love of slaughter;

Died some, *pro patria*,  
non "*dulce*" non "*et decor*" . . .  
walked eye-deep in hell  
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving  
came home, home to a lie,  
home to many deceits,  
home to old lies and new infamy;  
usury age-old and age-thick  
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.  
Young blood and high blood,  
fair cheeks, and fine bodies;  
fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,  
disillusions as never told in the old days,  
hysterias, trench confessions,  
laughter out of dead bellies.

## V

There died a myriad,  
And of the best, among them,  
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,  
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth,  
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,  
For a few thousand battered books.



## Envoi (1919)

*Go, dumb-born book,  
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:  
Hadst thou but song  
As thou hast subjects known,*

*Then were there cause in thee that should condone  
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie,  
And build her glories their longevity.*

*Tell her that sheds  
Such treasure in the air,  
Recking naught else but that her graces give  
Life to the moment,  
I would bid them live  
As roses might, in magic amber laid,  
Red overwrought with orange and all made  
One substance and one colour  
Braving time.*

*Tell her that goes  
With song upon her lips  
But sings not out the song, nor knows  
The maker of it, some other mouth,  
May be as fair as hers,  
Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,  
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,  
Siftings on siftings in oblivion,  
Till change hath broken down  
All things save Beauty alone.*

## CANTO XLV

### With Usura

*With usura hath no man a house of good stone  
each block cut smooth and well fitting  
that design might cover their face,  
with usura  
hath no man a painted paradise on his church wall  
harpes et luthes  
or where virgin receiveth message  
and halo projects from incision,  
with usura  
seeth no man Gonzaga his heirs and his concubines*

no picture is made to endure nor to live with  
but it is made to sell and sell quickly  
with usura, sin against nature,  
is thy bread ever more of stale rags  
is thy bread dry as paper,  
with no mountain wheat, no strong flour  
with usura the line grows thick  
with usura is no clear demarcation  
and no man can find site for his dwelling.  
Stone cutter is kept from his stone  
weaver is kept from his loom

#### WITH USURA

wool comes not to market  
sheep bringeth no gain with usura  
Usura is a murrain, usura  
blunteth the needle in the maid's hand  
and stoppeth the spinner's cunning. Pietro Lombardo  
Came not by usura  
Duccio came not by usura  
nor Pier della Francesca; Zuan Bellin' not by usura  
nor was 'La Calunnia' painted.  
Came not by usura Angelico; came not Ambrogio Praedis,  
came no church of cut stone signed: *Adamo me fecit*.  
Not by usura St. Trophime  
Not by usura Saint Hilaire,  
Usura rusteth the chisel  
It rusteth the craft and the craftsman  
It gnaweth the thread in the loom  
None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;  
Azure hath a canker by usura; cramoisi is unbroidered  
Emerald findeth no Memling  
Usura slayeth the child in the womb  
It stayeth the young man's courting  
It hath brought palsey to bed, lyeth  
between the young bride and her bridegroom

#### CONTRA NATURAM

They have brought whores for Eleusis  
Corpses are set to banquet  
at behest of usura.

THE BALLAD OF JESSE JAMES

Jesse James was a two-gun man,  
    *(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
Strong-arm chief of an outlaw clan.  
    *(From Kansas to Illinois!)*  
He twirled an old Colt forty-five,  
    *(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
They never took Jesse James alive.  
    *(Roll, Missouri, roll!)*  
Jesse James was King of the Wes';  
    *(Cataracks in the Missouri!)*  
He'd a di'mon' heart in his lef' breas';  
    *(Brown Missouri rolls!)*  
He'd a fire in his heart no hurt could stifle;  
    *(Thunder, Missouri!)*  
Lion eyes an' a Winchester rifle.  
    *(Missouri, roll down!)*

Jesse James rode a pinto hawse;  
Come at night to a water-cawse;  
Tetched with the rowel that pinto's flank;  
She sprung the torrent from bank to bank.

Jesse rode through a sleepin' town;  
Looked the moonlit street both up an' down;  
Crack-crack-crack, the street ran flames  
An' a great voice cried, "I'm Jesse James!"

Hawse an' afoot they're after Jess!  
    *(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
Spurrin' an' spurrin'—but he's gone Wes'.  
    *(Brown Missouri rolls!)*  
He was ten foot tall when he stood in his boots;  
    *(Lightnin' light the Missouri!)*  
More'n a match fer sich galoots.  
    *(Roll, Missouri, roll!)*

Jesse James rode outa the sage;  
Roun' the rocks come the swayin' stage;  
Straddlin' the road a giant stan's  
An' a great voice bellers, "Throw up yer han's!"

Jesse raked in the di'mon' rings,  
The big gold watches an' the yuther things;  
Jesse divvied 'em then an' thar  
With a cryin' child had lost her mar.

The U.S. Troopers is after Jess;  
*(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
Their hawses sweat foam, but he's gone Wes';  
*(Hear Missouri roar!)*  
He was broad as a b'ar, he'd a ches' like a drum,  
*(Wind and rain through Missouri!)*  
An' his red hair flamed like Kingdom Come.  
*(Missouri down to the seal)*

Jesse James all alone in the rain  
Stopped an' stuck up the Eas'-boun' train;  
Swayed through the coaches with horns an' a tail,  
Lit out with the bullion an' the registered mail.

Jess made 'em all turn green with fright,  
Quakin' in the aisles in the pitch-black night;  
An' he give all the bullion to a pore ole tramp  
Campin' nigh the cuttin' in the dirt an' damp.

The whole U.S. is after Jess;  
*(Roll on, Missouri!)*  
The son-of-a-gun, if he ain't gone Wes';  
*(Missouri to the seal)*  
He could chaw cold iron an' spit blue flame;  
*(Cataracks down the Missouri!)*  
He rode on a catamount he'd learned to tame.  
*(Hear that Missouri roll!)*

Jesse James rode into a bank;  
Give his pinto a tetch on the flank;  
Jumped the teller's window with an awful crash;  
Heaved up the safe an' twirled his mustache;

He said, "So long, boys!" he yelped, "So long!  
Feelin' porely today—I ain't feelin' strong!"  
Rode right through the wall agoin' crack-crack-crack,—  
Took the safe home to Mother in a gunny-sack.

They're creepin', they're crawlin', they're stalkin' Jess;  
*(Roll on, Missouri!)*

They's a rumor he's gone much further Wes';  
(*Roll, Missouri, roll!*)  
They's word of a cayuse hitched to the bars  
(*Ruddy clouds on Missouri!*)  
Of a golden sunset that busts into stars.  
(*Missouri, roll down!*)

Jesse James rode hell fer leather;  
He was a hawse an' a man together;  
In a cave in a mountain high up in air  
He lived with a rattlesnake, a wolf, an' a bear.

Jesse's heart was as sof' as a woman;  
Fer guts an' stren'th he was sooper-human;  
He could put six shots through a woodpecker's eye  
And take in one swaller a gallon o' rye.

They sought him here an' they sought him there,  
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)  
But he strides by night through the ways of the air,  
(*Brown Missouri rolls!*)  
They say he was took an' they say he is dead;  
(*Thunder, Missouri!*)  
But he ain't—he's a sunset overhead!  
(*Missouri down to the sea!*)

Jesse James was a Hercules.  
When he went through the woods he tore up the trees.  
When he went on the plains he smoked the groun'  
An' the hull lan' shuddered fer miles aroun'.

Jesse James wore a red bandanner  
That waved on the breeze like the Star-Spangled Banner;  
In seven states he cut up dadoes.  
He's gone with the buffler an' the desperadoes.

Yes, Jesse James was a two-gun man  
(*Roll on, Missouri!*)  
The same as when this song began;  
(*From Kansas to Illinois!*)  
An' when you see a sunset bust into flames  
(*Lightnin' light the Missouri!*)  
Or a thunderstorm blaze—that's Jesse James!  
(*Hear that Missouri roll!*)



THE FISH

wade  
through black jade.  
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one  
keeps  
adjusting the ash-heaps;  
opening and shutting itself like

an  
injured fan.  
The barnacles which encrust the side  
of the wave, cannot hide  
there for the submerged shafts of  
the

sun,  
split like spun  
glass, move themselves with spotlight  
swiftness  
into the crevices—  
in and out, illuminating

the  
turquoise sea  
of bodies. The water drives a wedge  
of iron through the iron edge  
of the cliff; whereupon the stars,

pink  
rice-grains, ink  
bespattered jelly-fish, crabs like green  
lilies, and submarine  
toadstools, slide each on the other.

All  
external  
marks of abuse are present on this  
defiant edifice—  
all the physical features of

ac-  
cident—lack  
of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and  
hatchet strokes, these things stand  
out on it; the chasm-side is

dead.

Repeated

evidence has proved that it can live  
on what cannot revive  
its youth. The sea grows old in it.

## THE MIND IS AN ENCHANTING THING

is an enchanted thing  
like the glaze on a  
katydid-wing  
subdivided by sun  
till the nettings are legion.  
Like Gieseking playing Scarlatti;  
like the apteryx-awl  
as a beak, or the  
kiwi's rain-shawl  
of haired feathers, the mind  
feeling its way as though blind,  
walks along with its eyes on the ground.  
It has memory's ear  
that can hear without  
having to hear.  
Like the gyroscope's fall,  
truly equivocal  
because trued by regnant certainty,  
it is a power of  
strong enchantment. It  
is like the dove-  
neck animated by  
sun; it is memory's eye;  
it's conscientious inconsistency.  
It tears off the veil; tears  
the temptation, the  
mist the heart wears,  
from its eyes,—if the heart  
has a face; it takes apart  
dejection. It's fire in the dove-neck's  
iridescence; in the  
inconsistencies  
of Scarlatti.

Unconfusion submits  
its confusion to proof; it's  
not a Herod's oath that cannot change.

HELLENISTICS

I look at the Greek-derived design that nourished my infancy—this Wedgwood copy of the Portland vase:

Someone had given it to my father—my eyes at five years old used to devour it by the hour.

I look at a Greek coin, four-drachma piece struck by Lysimachus: young Alexander's head

With the horns of Ammon and brave brow-ridges, the bright pride and immortal youth and wild sensitiveness.

I think of Achilles, Sappho, the Nike. I think of those mercenaries who marched in the heart of Asia

And lived to salute the sea: the lean faces like lance-heads, the grace of panthers. The dull welter of Asia.

I am past childhood, I look at this ocean and the fishing birds, the streaming skerries, the shining water,

The foam-heads, the exultant dawn-light going west, the pelicans, their huge wings half folded, plunging like stones.

Whatever it is catches my heart in its hands, whatever it is makes me shudder with love

And painful joy and the tears prickle . . . the Greeks were not inventors. The Greeks were not the inventors

Of shining clarity and jewel-sharp form and the beauty of God. He was free with men before the Greeks came:

He is here naked on the shining water. Every eye that has a man's nerves behind it has known him.

II

I think of the dull welter of Asia. I think of squalid savages along the Congo: the natural

Condition of man, that makes one say of all beasts "They are not contemptible. Man is contemptible." I see

The squalor of our own frost-bitten forefathers. I will  
praise the Greeks for having pared down the  
shame of three vices  
Natural to man and no other animal, cruelty and filth and  
superstition, grained in man's making.

### III

The age darkens, Europe mixes her cups of death, all the  
little Caesars fidget on their thrones,  
The old wound opens its clotted mouth to ask for new  
wounds. Men will fight through; men have tough  
hearts.  
Men will fight through to the autumn flowering and  
ordered prosperity. They will lift their heads in  
the great cities  
Of the empire and say: "Freedom? Freedom was a fire.  
We are well quit of freedom, we have found  
prosperity."  
They will say, "Where now are the evil prophets?" Thus  
for a time in the age's afterglow, the sterile time;  
But the wounds drain, the freedom has died, slowly the  
machines break down, slowly the wilderness re-  
turns.

### IV

Oh distant future children going down to the foot of the  
mountain, the new barbarism, the night of time,  
Mourn your own dead if you remember them, but not for  
civilization, not for our scuttled futilities.  
You are saved from being little entrails feeding large  
brains, you are saved from being little empty  
bundles of enjoyment,  
You are not to be fractional supported people but com-  
plete men; you will guard your own heads, you  
will have proud eyes.  
You will stand among the spears when you meet; life will  
be lovely and terrible again, great and in earnest;  
You will know hardship, hunger and violence: these are  
not the evils: what power can save you from the  
real evils  
Of barbarism? What poet will be born to tell you to hate  
cruelty and filth? What prophet will warn you  
When the witch-doctors begin dancing, or if any man says  
"I am a priest," to kill them with spears?

## APOLOGY FOR BAD DREAMS

In the purple light, heavy with redwood, the slopes drop  
seaward,  
Headlong convexities of forest, drawn in together to the  
steep ravine. Below, on the sea-cliff,  
A lonely clearing; a little field of corn by the streamside;  
a roof under spared trees. Then the ocean  
Like a great stone someone has cut to a sharp edge and  
polished to shining. Beyond it, the fountain  
And furnace of incredible light flowing up from the sunk  
sun. In the little clearing a woman  
Is punishing a horse; she had tied the halter to a sapling  
at the edge of the wood, but when the great  
whip  
Clung to the flanks the creature kicked so hard she feared  
he would snap the halter; she called from the  
house  
The young man her son; who fetched a chain tie-rope,  
they working together  
Noosed the small rusty links round the horse's tongue  
And tied him by the swollen tongue to the tree.  
Seen from this height they are shrunk to insect size.  
Out of all human relation. You cannot distinguish  
The blood dripping from where the chain is fastened,  
The beast shuddering; but the thrust neck and the legs  
Far apart. You can see the whip fall on the flanks . . .  
The gesture of the arm. You cannot see the face of the  
woman.  
The enormous light beats up out of the west across the  
cloudbars of the trade-wind. The ocean  
Darkens, the high clouds brighten, the hills darken to-  
gether. Unbridled and unbelievable beauty  
Covers the evening world . . . not covers, grows appar-  
ent out of it, as Venus down there grows out  
From the lit sky. What said the prophet? "I create good:  
and I create evil: I am the Lord."

## II

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,  
(The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the  
granite cliff the gaunt cypresses crown  
Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black  
what Titan? The hills like pointed flames

Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills  
under the sun, what immolation?)  
This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places:  
and like the passionate spirit of humanity  
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful  
deaths, the horrible transfigurements: I said in  
my heart,  
"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims  
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you  
Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place." And I  
said,  
"Burn sacrifices once a year to magic  
Horror away from the house, this little house here  
You have built over the ocean with your own hands  
Beside the standing boulders: for what are we,  
The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips  
And little hair, to think we should always be fed,  
Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner more  
liable  
Than the other animals. Pain and terror, the insanities of  
desire; not accidents but essential,  
And crowd up from the core:" I imagined victims for  
those wolves, I made them phantoms to follow,  
They have hunted the phantoms and missed the house.  
It is not good to forget over what gulfs the spirit  
Of the beauty of humanity, the petal of a lost flower  
blown seaward by the night-wind, floats to its  
quietness.

### III

Boulders blunted like an old bear's teeth break up from  
the headland; below them  
All the soil is thick with shells, the tide-rock feasts of a  
dead people.  
Here the granite flanks are scarred with ancient fire, the  
ghosts of the tribe  
Crouch in the nights beside the ghost of a fire, they try  
to remember the sunlight,  
Light has died out of their skies. These have paid some-  
thing for the future  
Luck of the country, while we living keep old griefs in  
memory: though God's

Envy is not a likely fountain of ruin, to forget evils calls  
down  
Sudden reminders from the cloud: remembered deaths be  
our redeemers;  
Imagined victims our salvation: white as the half moon  
at midnight  
Someone flamelike passed me, saying, "I am Tamar  
Cauldwell, I have my desire,"  
Then the voice of the sea returned, when she had gone  
by, the stars to their towers.  
. Beautiful country burn again, Point Pinos down to the  
Sur Rivers  
Burn as before with bitter wonders, land and ocean and  
the Carmel water.

#### IV

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor  
From the bruised root: a man having bad dreams, who  
invents victims, is only the ape of that God.  
He washes it out with tears and many waters, calcines it  
with fire in the red crucible,  
Deforms it, makes it horrible to itself: the spirit flies out  
and stands naked, he sees the spirit,  
He takes it in the naked ecstasy; it breaks in his hand,  
the atom is broken, the power that massed it  
Cries to the power that moves the stars, "I have come  
home to myself, behold me.  
I bruised myself in the flint mortar and burnt me  
In the red shell, I tortured myself, I flew forth,  
Stood naked of myself and broke me in fragments,  
And here am I moving the stars that are me."  
I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason  
For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.  
He being sufficient might be still. I think they admit no  
reason; they are the ways of my love.  
Unmeasured power, incredible passion, enormous craft:  
no thought apparent but burns darkly  
Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault;  
no thought outside: a certain measure in phe-  
nomena:  
The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the fore-  
land, the ever-returning roses of dawn.

PHILOMELA

Procne, Philomela, and Itylus,  
Your names are liquid, your improbable tale  
Is recited in the classic numbers of the nightingale.  
Ah, but our numbers are not felicitous,  
It goes not liquidly for us.

Perched on a Roman ilex, and duly apostrophized,  
The nightingale descanted unto Ovid;  
She has even appeared to the Teutons, the swilled and  
    gravid;  
At Fontainebleau it may be the bird was gallicized;  
Never was she baptized.

To England came Philomela with her pain,  
Fleeing the hawk her husband; querulous ghost,  
She wanders when he sits heavy on his roost,  
Utters herself in the original again,  
The untranslatable refrain.

Not to these shores she came! this other Thrace,  
Environ barbarous to the royal Attic;  
How could her delicate dirge run democratic,  
Delivered in a cloudless boundless public place  
To an inordinate race?

I pernoctated with the Oxford students once,  
And in the quadrangles, in the cloisters, on the Cher,  
Precociously knocked at antique doors ajar,  
Fatuously touched the hems of the hierophants,  
Sick of my dissonance.

I went out to Bagley Wood, I climbed the hill;  
Even the moon had slanted off in a twinkling,  
I heard the sepulchral owl and a few bells tinkling,  
There was no more villainous day to unfulfil,  
The diurnity was still.

Up from the darkest wood where Philomela sat,  
Her fairy numbers issued. What then ailed me?  
My ears are called capacious but they failed me,  
Her classics registered a little flat!  
I rose, and venomously spat.



Philomela, Philomela, lover of song,  
I am in despair if we may make us worthy,  
A bantering breed sophistical and swarthy;  
Unto more beautiful, persistently more young  
Thy fabulous provinces belong.

*T. S. Eliot, 1888—*

THE BOSTON EVENING  
TRANSCRIPT

The readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript*  
Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn.

When evening quickens faintly in the street,  
Wakening the appetites of life in some  
And to others bringing the *Boston Evening Transcript*,  
I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning  
Wearily, as one would turn to nod good-bye to Rochefou-  
cauld,  
If the street were time and he at the end of the street,  
And I say, "Cousin Harriet, here is the *Boston Evening*  
*Transcript.*"

THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED  
PRUFROCK

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-  
panes

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple  
pin—  
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:—  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,

Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
And should I then presume?  
And how should I begin?



Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of win-  
dows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.



And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)  
brought in upon a platter,

I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and  
snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—

If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.  
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled  
streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that  
trail along the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on  
a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
"That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all."



No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the  
beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

## DIFFICULTIES OF A STATESMAN

CRY what shall I cry?

All flesh is grass: comprehending  
The Companions of the Bath, the Knights of the British  
Empire, the Cavaliers,  
O Cavaliers! of the Legion of Honour,  
The Order of the Black Eagle (1st and 2nd class),  
And the Order of the Rising Sun.

Cry cry what shall I cry?

The first thing to do is to form the committees:  
The consultative councils, the standing committees, select  
committees and sub-committees.

One secretary will do for several committees.

What shall I cry?

Arthur Edward Cyril Parker is appointed telephone  
operator

At a salary of one pound ten a week rising by annual  
increments of five shillings

To two pounds ten a week; with a bonus of thirty shillings  
at Christmas

And one week's leave a year.

A committee has been appointed to nominate a commis-  
sion of engineers

To consider the Water Supply.

A commission is appointed.

For Public Works, chiefly the question of rebuilding the  
fortifications.

A commission is appointed

To confer with a Volscian commission

About perpetual peace: the fletchers and javelin-makers  
and smiths

Have appointed a joint committee to protest against the  
reduction of orders.

Meanwhile the guards shake dice on the marches.

And the frogs (O Mantuan) croak in the marshes.

Fireflies flare against the faint sheet lightning

What shall I cry?

Mother mother

Here is the row of family portraits, dingy busts, all look-  
ing remarkably Roman,

Remarkably like each other, lit up successively by the  
flare

Of a sweaty torchbearer, yawning.

O hidden under the . . . Hidden under the . . .

Where the dove's foot rested and locked for a moment,

A still moment, repose of noon, set under the upper  
branches of noon's widest tree  
Under the breast feathers stirred by the small wind after  
noon  
There the cyclamen spreads its wings, there the clematis  
droops over the lintel  
O mother (not among these busts, all correctly inscribed)  
I a tired head among these heads  
Necks strong to bear them  
Noses strong to break the wind  
Mother  
May we not be some time, almost now, together,  
If the mactations, immolations, oblations, impetrations,  
Are now observed  
May we not be  
O hidden  
Hidden in the stillness of noon, in the silent croaking  
night.  
Come with the sweep of the little bat's wing, with the  
small flare of the firefly or lightning bug,  
"Rising and falling, crowned with dust," the small crea-  
tures,  
The small creatures chirp thinly through the dust, through  
the night.  
O mother  
What shall I cry?  
We demand a committee, a representative committee, a  
committee of investigation

RESIGN RESIGN RESIGN

### LINES FOR AN OLD MAN

The tiger in the tiger-pit  
Is not more irritable than I.  
The whipping tail is not more still  
Than when I smell the enemy  
Writhing in the essential blood  
Or dangling from the friendly tree.  
When I lay bare the tooth of wit  
The hissing over the archèd tongue  
Is more affectionate than hate,  
More bitter than the love of youth,  
And inaccessible by the young.  
Reflected from my golden eye  
The dullard knows that he is mad.  
Tell me if I am not glad!

INVOCATION TO  
THE SOCIAL MUSE

Señora it is true the Greeks are dead:

It is true also that we here are Americans:  
That we use the machines: that a sight of the god is  
unusual:

That more people have more thoughts: that there are

Progress and science and tractors and revolutions and  
Marx and the wars more antiseptic and murderous  
And music in every home: there is also Hoover:

Does the lady suggest we should write it out in The  
Word?

Does Madame recall our responsibilities? We are  
Whores Fräulein: poets Fräulein are persons of

Known vocation following troops: they must sleep with  
Stragglers from either prince and of both views:  
The rules permit them to further the business of neither:

It is also strictly forbidden to mix in maneuvers:  
Those that infringe are inflated with praise on the plazas—  
Their bones are resultantly afterwards found under news-  
papers:

Preferring life with the sons to death with the fathers  
We also doubt on the record whether the sons  
Will still be shouting around with the same huzzas—

For we hope Lady to live to lie with the youngest:  
There are only a handful of things a man likes  
Generation to generation hungry or

Well fed: the earth's one: life's  
One: Mister Morgan is not one:

There is nothing worse for our trade than to be in style:

He that goes naked goes farther at last than another:  
Wrap the bard in a flag or a school and they'll jimmy his  
Door down and be thick in his bed—for a month:



(Who recalls the address now of the Imagists?)  
But the naked man has always his own nakedness:  
People remember forever his live limbs:

They may drive him out of the camps but one will take  
him:

They may stop his tongue on his teeth with a rope's  
argument—

He will lie in a house and be warm when they are  
shaking:

Besides Tovarishch how to embrace an army?  
How to take to one's chamber a million souls?  
How to conceive in the name of a column of marchers?

The things of the poet are done to a man alone  
As the things of love are done—or of death when he hears  
the

Step withdraw on the stair and the clock tick only:

Neither his class nor his kind nor his trade may come near  
him

There where he lies on his left arm and will die:  
Nor his class nor his kind nor his trade when the blood is  
jeering

And his knee's in the soft of the bed where his love lies:

I remind you Barinya the life of the poet is hard—  
A hardy life with a boot as quick as a fiver:

Is it just to demand of us also to bear arms?

*e. e. cummings, 1894-*

POEM, OR BEAUTY HURTS  
MR. VINAL

take it from me kiddo  
believe me  
my country, 'tis of

you, land of the Cluett  
Shirt Boston Garter and Spearmint  
Girl With The Wrigley Eyes (of you  
land of the Arrow Ide  
and Earl &  
Wilson  
Collars) of you i  
sing: land of Abraham Lincoln and Lydia E. Pinkham,  
land above all of Just Add Hot Water And Serve—  
from every B. V. D.

let freedom ring

amen. i do however protest, anent the un-  
-spontaneous and otherwise scented merde which  
greet's one (Everywhere Why) as divine poesy per  
that and this radically defunct periodical. i would

suggest that certain ideas gestures  
rhymes, like Gillette Razor Blades  
having been used and reused  
to the mystical moment of dullness emphatically are  
Not To Be Resharpened. (Case in point

if we are to believe these gently O sweetly  
melancholy trillers amid the thrillers  
these crepuscular violinists among my and your  
skyscrapers—Helen & Cleopatra were Just Too Lovely,  
The Snail's On The Thorn enter Morn and God's  
In His andsoforth

do you get me?) according  
to such supposedly indigenious

throstles Art is O World O Life  
a formula: example, Turn Your Shirttails Into  
Drawers and If It Isn't an Eastman It Isn't A

Kodak therefore my friends let  
us now sing each and all fortissimo A-  
mer  
i

ca, I  
love,  
You. And there're a  
hun-dred-mil-lion-oth-ers, like  
all of you successfully if  
delicately gelded (or spaded)  
gentlemen (and ladies)—pretty

little liverpill—  
hearted-Nujolneeding-There's-A-Reason  
americans (who tensetendoned and with  
upward vacant eyes, painfully  
perpetually crouched, quivering, upon the  
sternly allotted sandpile  
—how silently  
emit a tiny violetflavoured nuisance: Odor?

ono.  
comes out like a ribbon lies flat on the brush

## SOMEWHERE I HAVE NEVER TRAVELLED, GLADLY BEYOND

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond  
any experience, your eyes have their silence:  
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,  
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclothe me  
though i have closed myself as fingers,  
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens  
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose

or if you wish be to close me, i and  
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,  
as when the heart of this flower imagines  
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
the power of your intense fragility: whose texture  
compels me with the colour of its countries,  
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
and opens; only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands'

"SWEET SPRING IS YOUR"

"sweet spring is your  
time is my time is our  
time for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love"

(all the merry little birds are  
flying in the floating in the  
very spirits singing in  
are winging in the blossoming)

lovers go and lovers come  
awandering awondering  
but any two are perfectly  
alone there's nobody else alive

(such a sky and such a sun  
i never knew and neither did you  
and everybody never breathed  
quite so many kinds of yes)

not a tree can count his leaves  
each herself by opening  
but shining who by thousands mean  
only one amazing thing

(secretly adoring shyly  
tiny winging darting floating  
merry in the blossoming  
always joyful selves are singing)

"sweet spring is your  
time is my time is our  
time for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love"

# *John Wheelright, 1897-1940*

## FISH FOOD

### *An Obituary to Hart Crane*

As you drank deep as Thor, did you think of milk or  
wine?

Did you drink blood, while you drank the salt deep?  
Or see through the film of light, that sharpened your rage  
with its stare,

a shark, dolphin, turtle? Did you not see the Cat  
who, when Thor lifted her, unbased the cubic ground?  
You would drain fathomless flagons to be slaked with  
vacuum—

The sea's teats have suckled you, and you are sunk far  
in bubble-dreams, under swaying translucent vines  
of thundering interior wonder. Eagles can never now  
carry parts of your body, over cupped mountains  
as emblems of their anger, embers to fire self-hate  
to other wonders, unfolding white flaming vistas.

Fishes now look upon you, with eyes which do not gossip.  
Fishes are never shocked. Fishes will kiss you, each  
fish tweak you; every kiss takes bits of you away,  
till your bones alone will roll, with the Gulf Stream's  
swell.

So has it been already, so have the carpers and puffers  
nibbled your carcass of fame, each to his liking. Now  
in tides of noon, the bones of your thought-suspended  
structures

gleam as you intended. Noon pulled your eyes with small  
magnetic headaches; the will seeped from your blood.

Seeds

of meaning popped from the pods of thought. And you  
fall. And the unseen

churn of Time changes the pearl-hued ocean;  
like a pearl-shaped drop, in a huge water-clock  
falling; from *came* to *go*, from *come* to *went*. And you fell.  
Waters received you. Waters of our Birth in Death dis-  
solve you.

Now you have willed it, may the Great Wash take you.  
As the Mother-Lover takes your woe away, and cleansing  
grief and you away, you sleep, you do not snore.  
Lie still. Your rage is gone on a bright flood  
away; as, when a bad friend held out his hand

you said, "Do not talk any more. I know you meant no harm."

What was the soil whence your anger sprang, who are deaf

as the stones to the whispering flight of the Mississippi's rivers?

What did you see as you fell? What did you hear as you sank?

Did it make you drunken with hearing?

I will not ask any more. You saw or heard no evil.

*Louise Bogan, 1897-*

"COME, SLEEP . . ."

The bee's fixed hexagon;  
The ant's downward tower;  
The whale's effortless eating;  
The palms' love; the flower

Burnished like brass, clean like wax  
Under the pollen;  
The rough grass-blade upright;  
The smooth swathe fallen:

Do the shadows of these forms and appetites  
Repeat, when these lives give over,  
In sleep, the rôle of the selfish devourer,  
The selfless lover?

Surely, whispers in the glassy corridor  
Never trouble their dream.  
Never, for them, the dark turreted house reflects itself  
In the depthless stream.

*Anonymous*

YOUNG WOMAN'S BLUES

Negro Blues, Twentieth Century

Woke up this mo'nin'  
When chickens were crowin' for day,  
Felt on the right side of my pillow,  
My man had gone away.

By his pillow he left a note  
Reading, "I'm sorry, Jane,  
"You got my goat,  
"No time to marry,  
"No time to settle down."

I'm a young woman  
An' ain't done runnin' roun',  
I'm a young woman  
An' ain't done runnin' roun',  
Some people call me a hobo,  
Some call me a bum,  
Nobody knows my name.  
Nobody knows what I've done.  
I'm as good as any woman in your town;  
I ain't no high yaller,  
I'm a deep yaller-brown.  
I ain't goin' marry, ain't goin' settle down;  
I'm goin' drink good moonshine  
An' run these browns down.

See that long, lonesome road?  
Don' you know it's gotta end?

An' I'm a good woman,  
An' I kin get plenty men.



THE MOUNTAIN WHIPPOORWILL

Up in the mountains, it's lonesome all the time.  
(Sof' win' slewin' thu' the sweet-potato vine).

Up in the mountains it's lonesome for a child.  
(Whippoorwills a-callin' when the sap runs wild).

Up in the mountains, mountains in the fog,  
Everythin's as lazy as an old houn' dog.

Born in the mountains, never raised a pet,  
Don't want nuthin' an' never got it yet.

Born in the mountains, lonesome-born,  
Raised runnin' ragged thu' the cockleburrs and corn.

Never knew my pappy, mebbe never should,  
Think he was a fiddle made of mountain laurel-wood.

Never had a mammy to teach me pretty-please.  
Think she was a whippoorwill, a-skitin thu' the trees.

Never had a brother ner a whole pair of pants,  
But when I start to fiddle, why, yuh got to start to dance!

*Listen to my fiddle—Kingdom Come—Kingdom Come!  
Hear the frogs a-chunkin' "Jug o' rum, Jug o' rum!"  
Hear that mountain-whippoorwill be lonesome in the air,  
An' I'll tell yuh how I traveled to the Essex County Fair.*

Essex County has a mighty pretty fair,  
All the smarty fiddlers from the South come there.

Elbows flyin' as they rosin up the bow  
For the First Prize Contest in the Georgia Fiddlers' Show.

Old Dan Wheeling, with his whiskers in his ears,  
King-pin Fiddler for nearly twenty years.

Big Tom Sargent, with his blue wall-eye,  
An' Little Jimmy Weezer that can make a fiddle cry.

*All sittin' roun', spittin' high an' struttin' proud,  
(Listen, little whippoorwill, yuh better bug yore eyes!)*

*Tun-a-tun-a-tunin' while the jedges told the crowd  
Them that got the mostest claps'd win the bestest prize.*

Everybody waitin' for the first tweedle-dee,  
When in comes a-stumblin'—hill-billy mel

Bowed right pretty to the jedges an' the rest,  
Took a silver dollar from a hole inside my vest,

Plunked it on the table an' said, "There's my callin' card  
An' anyone that licks me—well, he's got to fiddle hard!"

Old Dan Wheeling, he was laughin' fit to holler,  
Little Jimmy Weezer said, "There's one dead dollar!"

Big Tom Sargent had a yaller-toothy grin,  
But I tucked my little whippoorwill spang underneath my  
chin,

An' petted it an' tuned it till the jedges said, "Begin!"

Big Tom Sargent was the first in line;  
He could fiddle all the bugs off a sweet-potato vine.

He could fiddle down a possum from a mile-high tree.  
He could fiddle up a whale from the bottom of the sea.

Yuh could hear hands spankin' till they spanked each  
other raw,

When he finished variations on "Turkey in the Straw."

Little Jimmy Weezer was the next to play;  
He could fiddle all night, he could fiddle all day.

He could fiddle chills, he could fiddle fever,  
He could make a fiddle rustle like a lowland river.

He could make a fiddle croon like a lovin' woman,  
An' they clapped like thunder when he'd finished strum-  
min'.

Then came the ruck of the bob-tailed fiddlers,  
The let's go-easies, the fair-to-middlers.

They got their claps an' they lost their bicker,  
An' settled back for some more corn-licker.

An' the crowd was tired of their no-count squealing,  
When out in the center steps Old Dan Wheeling.

*He fiddled high and he fiddled low,  
(Listen, little whippoorwill; yuh got to spread yore  
wings!)*

*He fiddled with a cherrywood bow.  
(Old Dan Wheeling's got bee-honey in his strings.)*

He fiddled the wind by the lonesome moon,  
He fiddled a most almighty tune.

He started fiddling like a ghost,  
He ended fiddling like a host.

He fiddled north an' he fiddled south,  
He fiddled the heart right out of yore mouth.

He fiddled here an' he fiddled there.  
He fiddled salvation everywhere.

*When he was finished, the crowd cut loose,  
(Whippoorwill, they's rain on yore breast.)  
An' I sat there wonderin', "What's the use?"  
(Whippoorwill, fly home to yore nest.)*

But I stood up pert an' I took my bow,  
An' my fiddle went to my shoulder, so.

An'—they wasn't no crowd to get me fazed—  
But I was alone where I was raised.

Up in the mountains, so still it makes yuh skeered.  
Where God lies sleepin' in his big white beard.

An' I heard the sound of the squirrel in the pine,  
An' I heard the earth a-breathin' thu' the long night-time.

They've fiddled the rose, an' they've fiddled the thorn,  
But they haven't fiddled the mountain-corn.

They've fiddled sinful an' fiddled moral,  
But they haven't fiddled the breshwood-laurel.

They've fiddled loud, an' they've fiddled still,  
But they haven't fiddled the whippoorwill.

I started off with a *dump-diddle-dump*,  
*(Oh, hell's broke loose in Georgia!)*  
Skunk-cabbage growin' by the bee-gum stump,  
*(Whippoorwill, yo're singin' now!)*

Oh, Georgia booze is mighty fine booze,  
The best yuh ever poured yuh,  
But it eats the soles right offen your shoes,  
For Hell's broke loose in Georgia.

My mother was a whippoorwill pert,  
My father, he was lazy,  
But I'm Hell broke loose in a new store shirt  
To fiddle all Georgia crazy.

Swing yore partners—up an' down the middle!  
Sashay now—oh, listen to that fiddle!  
Flapjacks flippin' on a red-hot griddle,  
An' Hell broke loose,  
Hell broke loose,  
Fire on the mountains—snakes in the grass.  
Satan' here a-bilin'—oh, Lordy, let him pass!  
Go down Moses, set my people free,  
Pop goes the weasel thu' the old Red Seal  
Jonah sittin' on a hickory-bough,  
Up jumps a whale—an' where's yore prophet now?  
Rabbit in the pea-patch, possum in the pot,  
Try an' stop my fiddle, now my fiddle's gettin' hot!  
Whippoorwill, singin' thu' the mountain hush,  
Whippoorwill, shoutin' from the burnin' bush,  
Whippoorwill, cryin' in the stable-door,  
Sing to-night as yuh never sang before!  
Hell's broke loose for forty miles aroun'  
Bound to stop yore music if yuh don't sing it down.  
Sing on the mountains, little whippoorwill,  
Sing to the valleys, an' slap 'em with a hill,  
For I'm struttin' high as an eagle's quill,  
An' Hell's broke loose,  
Hell's broke loose,  
Hell's broke loose in Georgia!

They wasn't a sound when I stopped bowin',  
(*Whippoorwill, yuh can sing no more.*)  
But, somewhere or other, the dawn was growin',  
(*Oh, mountain whippoorwill!*)

An' I thought, "I've fiddled all night an' lost.  
Yo're a good hill-billy, but yuh've been bossed."

So I went to congratulate old man Dan,  
—But he put his fiddle into my han'—  
An' then the noise of the crowd began.

I PAINT WHAT I SEE

*A Ballad of Artistic Integrity*

"What do you paint, when you paint a wall?"

Said John D.'s grandson Nelson.

"Do you paint just anything there at all?"

"Will there be any doves, or a tree in fall?"

"Or a hunting scene, like an English hall?"

*"I paint what I see," said Rivera.*

"What are the colors you use when you paint?"

Said John D.'s grandson Nelson.

"Do you use any red in the beard of a saint?"

"If you do, is it terribly red, or faint?"

"Do you use any blue? Is it Prussian?"

*"I paint what I paint," said Rivera.*

"Whose is that head that I see on my wall?"

Said John D.'s grandson Nelson.

"Is it anyone's head whom we know, at all?"

"A Rensselaer, or a Saltonstall?"

"Is it Franklin D.? Is it Mordaunt Hall?"

"Or is it the head of a Russian?"

*"I paint what I think," said Rivera.*

*"I paint what I paint, I paint what I see,*

*"I paint what I think," said Rivera,*

*"And the thing that is dearest in life to me*

*"In a bourgeois hall is Integrity;*

*"However . . .*

*"I'll take out a couple of people drinkin'*

*"And put in a picture of Abraham Lincoln,*

*"I could even give you McCormick's reaper*

*"And still not make my art much cheaper.*

*"But the head of Lenin has got to stay*

*"Or my friends will give me the bird today*

*"The bird, the bird, forever."*

"It's not good taste in a man like me,"

Said John D.'s grandson Nelson,

"To question an artist's integrity  
"Or mention a practical thing like a fee,  
"But I know what I like to a large degree  
    "Though art I hate to hamper;  
"For twenty-one thousand conservative bucks  
"You painted a radical. I say shucks,  
    "I never could rent the offices—  
    "The capitalistic offices.  
"For this, as you know, is a public hall  
"And people want doves, or a tree in fall,  
"And though your art I dislike to hamper,  
"I owe a *little* to God and Gramper,  
    "And after all,  
    "It's *my* wall . . ."

"We'll see if it is," said Rivera.



To that deep wonderment, our native clay  
Whose depth of red, eternal flesh of Pocahontas—  
Those continental folded aeons, surcharged  
With sweetness below derricks, chimneys, tunnels—  
Is veined by all that time has really pledged us . . .  
And from above, thin squeaks of radio static,  
The captured fume of space foams in our ears—  
What whisperings of far watches on the main  
Relapsing into silence, while time clears  
Our lenses, lifts a focus, resurrects  
A periscope to glimpse what joys or pain  
Our eyes can share or answer—then deflects  
Us, shunting to a labyrinth submersed  
Where each sees only his dim past reversed . . .

But that star-glistered salver of infinity,  
The circle, blind crucible of endless space,  
Is sluiced by motion,—subjugated never.  
Adam and Adam's answer in the forest  
Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool.  
Now the eagle dominates our days, is jurist  
Of the ambiguous cloud. We know the strident rule  
Of wings imperious . . . Space, instantaneous,  
Flickers a moment, consumes us in its smile:  
A flash over the horizon—shifting gears—  
And we have laughter, or more sudden tears.  
Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact  
From which we wake into the dream of act;  
Seeing himself an atom in a shroud—  
Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!

“—Recorders ages hence”—ah, syllables of faith!  
Walt, tell me, Walt Whitman, if infinity  
Be still the same as when you walked the beach  
Near Paumanok—your lone patrol—and heard the wraith  
Through surf, its bird note there a long time falling . . .  
For you, the panoramas and this breed of towers,  
Of you—the theme that's statured in the cliff.  
O Saunterer on free ways still ahead!  
Not this our empire yet, but labyrinth  
Wherein your eyes, like the Great Navigator's without  
ship,

Gleam from the great stones of each prison crypt  
Of canyoned traffic . . . Confronting the Exchange,  
Surviving in a world of stocks,—they also range  
Across the hills where second timber strays



Back over Connecticut farms, abandoned pastures,—  
Sea eyes and tidal, undenyng, bright with myth!

The nasal whine of power whips a new universe . . .  
Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,  
Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house  
Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,  
New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed  
Of dynamos, where hearing's leash is strummed . . .  
Power's script,—wound, bobbin-bound, refined—  
Is stropped to the slap of belts on booming spools, spurred  
Into the bulging bouillon, harnessed jelly of the stars.  
Towards what? The forked crash of split thunder parts  
Our hearing momentarily; but fast in whirling armatures,  
As bright as frogs' eyes, giggling in the girth  
Of steely gizzards—axle-bound, confined  
In coiled precision, bunched in mutual glee  
The bearings glint,—O murmurless and shined  
In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy!

Stars scribble on our eyes the frosty sagas,  
The gleaming cantos of unvanquished space . . .  
O sinewy silver biplane, nudging the wind's withers!  
There, from Kill Devils Hill at Kitty Hawk  
Two brothers in their twinship left the dune;  
Warping the gale, the Wright windwrestlers veered  
Capeward, then blading the wind's flank, banked and  
spun

What ciphers risen from prophetic script,  
What marathons new-set between the stars!  
The soul, by naphtha fledged into new reaches,  
Already knows the closer clasp of Mars,—  
New latitudes, unknotting, soon give place  
To what fierce schedules, rife of doom apace!



And now, as launched in abysmal cupolas of space,  
Toward endless terminals, Easters of speeding light—  
Vast engines outward veering with seraphic grace  
On clarion cylinders pass out of sight  
To course that span of consciousness thou'st named  
The Open Road—thy vision is reclaimed!  
What heritage thou'st signalled to our hands!

Above the Cape's ghoul-mound, O joyous seer!  
And see! the rainbow's arch—how shimmeringly stands

Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear  
In their own veins uncanceled thy sure tread  
And read thee by the aureole 'round thy head  
Of pasture-shine, *Panis Angelicus!*

Yes, Walt,

Afoot again, and onward without halt,—  
Not soon, nor suddenly,—No, never to let go

My hand

in yours,

Walt Whitman—

so—

## THE BROKEN TOWER

The bell-rope that gathers God at dawn  
Dispatches me as though I dropped down the knell  
Of a spent day—to wander the cathedral lawn  
From pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell.

Have you not heard, have you not seen that corps  
Of shadows in the tower, whose shoulders sway  
Antiphonal carillons launched before  
The stars are caught and hived in the sun's ray?

The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower;  
And swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave  
Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score  
Of broken intervals. . . . And I, their sexton slave!

Oval encyclicals in canyons heaping  
The impasse high with choir. Banked voices slain!  
Pagodas, campaniles with reveilles outleaping—  
O terraced echoes prostrate on the plain! . . .

And so it was I entered the broken world  
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice  
An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)  
But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

My word I poured. But it was cognate, scored  
Of that tribunal monarch of the air  
Whose thigh embronzes earth, strikes crystal Word  
In wounds pledged once to hope—cleft to despair?

The steep encroachments of my blood left me  
No answer (could blood hold such a lofty tower

As flings the question true?)—or is it she  
Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power?—

And through whose pulse I hear, counting the strokes  
My veins recall and add, revived and sure  
The angelus of wars my chest evokes:  
What I hold healed, original now, and pure . . .

And builds, within, a tower that is not stone  
(Not stone can jacket heaven)—but slip  
Of pebbles—visible wings of silence sown  
In azure circles, widening as they dip

The matrix of the heart, lift down the eye  
That shrines the quiet lake and swells a tower . . .  
The commodious, tall decorum of that sky  
Unseals her earth, and lifts love in its shower.

*Thomas Wolfe, 1900-1938*

SOMETHING HAS SPOKEN TO ME  
IN THE NIGHT

Something has spoken to me in the night,  
Burning the tapers of the waning year;  
Something has spoken in the night,  
And told me I shall die, I know not where.

Saying:

"To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing;  
To lose the life you have, for greater life;  
To leave the friends you loved, for greater loving;  
To find a land more kind than home, more large than  
earth—

"Whereon the pillars of this earth are founded,  
Toward which the conscience of the world is tending—  
A wind is rising, and the rivers flow."

PORTRAIT II

The clear brown eyes, kindly and alert, with 12-20 vision,  
give confident regard to the passing world through  
R. K. Lampert & Company lenses framed in gold;  
His soul, however, is all his own;  
Arndt Brothers necktie and hat (with feather) supply a  
touch of youth.

With his soul his own, he drives, chats and drives,  
The first and second bicuspid, lower right, replaced by  
bridgework, while two incisors have porcelain  
crowns;

(Render unto Federal, state and city Caesar, but not unto  
time;  
Render nothing unto time until Amalgamated Death serves  
final notice, in proper form;

The vault is ready;  
The will has been drawn by Clagget, Clagget, Clagget &  
Brown;  
The policies are adequate, Confidential's best, reimburs-  
ing for disability, partial or complete with double  
indemnity should the end be a pure and simple  
accident)

Nothing unto time,  
Nothing unto change, nothing unto fate,  
Nothing unto you, and nothing unto me, or to any other  
known or unknown party or parties, living or  
deceased;

But Mercury shoes, with special arch supporters, take  
much of the wear and tear;  
On the course, a custombuilt driver corrects a tendency  
to slice;  
Love's ravages have been repaired (it was a textbook case)  
by Drs. Schultz, Lightner, Mannheim, and Goode,  
While all of it is enclosed in excellent tweed, with Mr.  
Baumer's personal attention to the shoulders and  
waist;

And all of it now roving, chatting amiably through space  
in a Plymouth 6,  
With his soul (his own) at peace, soothed by Walter  
Lippmann, and sustained by Haig & Haig.

THE GROUNDHOG

In June, amid the golden fields,  
I saw a groundhog lying dead.  
Dead lay he, my senses shook,  
And mind outshot our naked frailty.  
There lowly in the vigorous summer  
His form began its senseless change,  
And made my senses waver dim  
Seeing nature ferocious in him.  
Inspecting close his maggots' might  
And seething cauldron of his being,  
Half with loathing, half with a strange love,  
I poked him with an angry stick.  
The fever arose, became a flame  
And Vigor circumscribed the skies,  
Immense energy in the sun,  
And through my frame a sunless trembling.  
My stick had done nor good nor harm.  
Then stood I silent in the day  
Watching the object, as before;  
And kept my reverence for knowledge  
Trying for control, to be still,  
To quell the passion of the blood;  
Until I had bent down on my knees  
Praying for joy in the sight of decay.  
And so I left; and I returned  
In Autumn strict of eye, to see  
The sap gone out of the groundhog,  
But the bony sodden hulk remained.  
But the year had lost its meaning,  
And in intellectual chains  
I lost both love and loathing,  
Mured up in the wall of wisdom.  
Another summer took the fields again  
Massive and burning, full of life,  
But when I chanced upon the spot  
There was only a little hair left,  
And bones bleaching in the sunlight  
Beautiful as architecture;  
I watched them like a geometer,  
And cut a walking stick from a birch.  
It has been three years, now.  
There is no sign of the groundhog.

I stood there in the whirling summer,  
My hand capped a withered heart,  
And thought of China and of Greece,  
Of Alexander in his tent;  
Of Montaigne in his tower,  
Of Saint Theresa in her wild lament.

THE SHAPE OF THE FIRE

I

What's this? A dish for fat lips.  
Who says? A nameless stranger.  
Is he a bird or a tree? Not everyone can tell.

Water recedes to the crying of spiders.

An old scow bumps over black rocks.

A cracked pod calls.

Mother me out of here. What more will the  
bones allow?

Will the sea give the wind suck? A toad folds  
into a stone.

These flowers are all fangs. Comfort me, fury,  
Wake me, witch, we'll do the dance of rotten  
sticks.

Shale loosens. Marl reaches into the field. Small birds pass  
over water.

Spirit, come near. This is only the edge of whiteness.

I can't laugh at a procession of dogs.

In the hour of ripeness the tree is barren.

The she-bear mopes under the hill.

Mother, mother, stir from your cave of sorrow.

A low mouth laps water. Weeds, weeds, how I love you.

The arbor is cooler. Farewell, farewell, fond worm.

The warm comes without sound.

II

Where's the eye?  
The eye's in the sty.  
The ear's not here  
Beneath the hair,  
When I took off my clothes  
To find a nose,  
There was only one shoe  
For the waltz of To,  
The pinch of Where.

Time for the flat-headed man. I recognized that listener,  
Him with the platitudes and rubbery doughnuts,  
Melting at the knees, a varicose horror.  
Hello, hello. My nerves knew you, dear boy.



Have you come to unhinge my shadow?  
Last night I slept in the pits of a tongue.  
The silver fish ran in and out of my special bindings;  
I grew tired of the ritual of names and the assistant keeper  
of the molluscs:  
Up over a viaduct I came, to the snakes and sticks of  
another winter,  
A two-legged dog hunting a new horizon of howls.  
The wind sharpened itself on a rock;  
A voice sang:

Pleasure on ground  
Has no sound,  
Easily maddens  
The uneasy man.

Who, careless, slips  
In coiling ooze  
Is trapped to the lips,  
Leaves more than shoes;

Must pull off clothes  
To jerk like a frog  
On belly and nose  
From the sucking bog.

My meat eats me. Who waits at the gate?  
Mother of quartz, your words writhe into my ear.  
Renew the light, lewd whisper.

### III

The wasp waits.  
The edge cannot eat the centre.  
The grape glistens.  
The path tells little to the serpent.  
An eye comes out of the wave.  
The journey from flesh is longest.  
A rose sways least.  
The redeemer comes a dark way.

### IV

Morning-fair, follow me further back  
Into that minnowy world of weeds and ditches,  
When the herons floated high over the white houses,

And the little crabs slipped into silvery craters,  
When the sun for me glinted the sides of a sand-grain,  
And my intent stretched over the buds at their first trembling.

That air and shine: and the flicker's loud summer call;  
The bearded boards in the stream and the all of apples;  
The glad hen on the hill; and the trellis humming.  
Death was not. I lived in a simple drowse:  
Hands and hair moved through a dream of waking blossoms.

Rain sweetened the cave and the dove still called;  
The flowers leaned on themselves, the flowers in hollows;  
And love, love sang toward.

## V

To have the whole air!—  
The light, the full sun  
Coming down on the flowerheads,  
The tendrils turning slowly,  
A slow snail-lifting, liquescent;  
To be by the rose  
Rising slowly out of its bed,  
Still as a child in its first loneliness;  
To see cyclamen veins become clearer in early sunlight,  
And mist lifting, drifting out of the brown cat-tails;  
To stare into the after-light, the glitter left on the lake's surface

When the sun has fallen behind a wooded island;  
To follow the drops sliding from a lifted oar,  
Held up, while the rower breathes, and the small boat  
drifts quietly shoreward;  
To know that light falls and fills, often without our knowing,

As an opaque vase fills to the brim from a quick pouring,  
Fills and trembles at the edge yet does not flow over,  
Still holding and feeding the stem of the contained flower.

*James Agee, 1909-1955*

PROLOGUE

From *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

To Walker Evans

Against time and the damages of the brain  
Sharpen and calibrate. Not yet in full,  
Yet in some arbitrated part  
Order the façade of the listless summer.

Spies, moving delicately among the enemy,  
The younger sons, the fools,  
Set somewhat aside the dialects and the stained skins of  
feigned madness,  
Ambiguously signal, baffle, the eluded sentinel.

Edgar, weeping for pity, to the shelf of that sick bluff,  
Bring your blind father, and describe a little;  
Behold him, part wakened, fallen among field flowers  
shallow  
But undisclosed, withdraw.

Not yet that naked hour when armed,  
Disguise flung flat, squarely we challenge the fiend.  
Still, comrade, the running of beasts and the ruining  
heaven  
Still captive the old wild king.

*Fleming MacLiesh, 1911-*

A SUMMER SHOWER

Seated at breakfast, in the indigent country  
Of habit, with spoon half lifted, suddenly  
Before my preoccupied wife and oblivious child  
Waylaid by thunder, tapped with thunder's warrant  
And hailed to the threshold of annihilation:  
Immobilized and limned in leaping current  
In the lightning's explosive arc, I see  
The obstinate structures of identity  
Fade into outline as the intractable bone,  
Flesh, blood and muscle under gamma rays  
Are fogged upon a film. One over one,  
The disparate and distinct, the deserted highway,  
The kitten on the porch, the sheltering bird,  
My family and portentous self are blurred  
And blend with the agitation of the oak  
And air and convulsive cumulus and the smooth grass  
As time with its molecules fused by this stroke  
Like sand by radiation turns to glass.  
All that seems self-determined, self-defined  
By mortal, upstart error of the mind,  
Its crippling arrogance, now at one pass  
Of the Magician stands indifferent, still,  
And transparent as the paralyzed will.

THE FISH

I caught a tremendous fish  
and held him beside the boat  
half out of water, with my hook  
fast in a corner of his mouth.  
He didn't fight.  
He hadn't fought at all.  
He hung a grunting weight,  
battered and venerable  
and homely. Here and there  
his brown skin hung in strips  
like ancient wall-paper,  
and its pattern of darker brown  
was like wall-paper:  
shapes like full-blown roses  
stained and lost through age.  
He was speckled with barnacles,  
fine rosettes of lime,  
and infested  
with tiny white sea-lice,  
and underneath two or three  
rags of green weed hung down.  
While his gills were breathing in  
the terrible oxygen  
—the frightening gills  
fresh and crisp with blood,  
that can cut so badly—  
I thought of the coarse white flesh  
packed in like feathers,  
the big bones and the little bones,  
the dramatic reds and blacks  
of his shiny entrails,  
and the pink swim-bladder  
like a big peony.  
I looked into his eyes  
which were far larger than mine  
but shallower, and yellowed,  
the irises backed and packed  
with tarnished tinfoil  
seen through the lenses  
of old scratched isinglass.  
They shifted a little, but not  
to return my stare.

—It was more like the tipping  
of an object toward the light.  
I admired his sullen face,  
the mechanism of his jaw,  
and then I saw  
that from his lower lip  
—if you could call it a lip—  
grim, wet, and weapon-like,  
hung five old pieces of fish-line,  
or four and a wire leader  
with the swivel still attached,  
with all their five big hooks  
grown firmly in his mouth.  
A green line, frayed at the end  
where he broke it, two heavier lines,  
and a fine black thread  
still crimped from the strain and snap  
when it broke and he got away.  
Like medals with their ribbons  
frayed and wavering,  
a five-haired beard of wisdom  
trailing from his aching jaw.  
I stared and stared  
and victory filled up  
the little rented boat,  
from the pool of bilge  
where oil had spread a rainbow  
around the rusted engine  
to the bailer rusted orange,  
the sun-cracked thwarts,  
the oarlocks on their strings,  
the gunnels—until everything  
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!  
And I let the fish go.

ELEGY FOR A DEAD SOLDIER

I

A white sheet on the tail-gate of a truck  
Becomes an altar; two small candlesticks  
Sputter at each side of the crucifix  
Laid round with flowers brighter than the blood,  
Red as the red of our apocalypse,  
Hibiscus that a marching man will pluck  
To stick into his rifle or his hat,  
And great blue morning-glories pale as lips  
That shall no longer taste or kiss or swear.  
The wind begins a low magnificat,  
The chaplain chats, the palmtrees swirl their hair,  
The columns come together through the mud.

II

We too are ashes as we watch and hear  
The psalm, the sorrow, and the simple praise  
Of one whose promised thoughts of other days  
Were such as ours, but now wholly destroyed,  
The service record of his youth wiped out,  
His dream dispersed by shot, must disappear.  
What can we feel but wonder at a loss  
That seems to point at nothing but the doubt  
Which flirts our sense of luck into the ditch?  
Reader of Paul who prays beside this fosse,  
Shall we believe our eyes or legends rich  
With glory and rebirth beyond the void?

III

For this comrade is dead, dead in the war,  
A young man out of millions yet to live,  
One cut away from all that war can give,  
Freedom of self and peace to wander free.  
Who mourns in all this sober multitude  
Who did not feel the bite of it before  
The bullet found its aim? This worthy flesh,  
This boy laid in a coffin and reviewed—  
Who has not wrapped himself in this same flag,  
Heard the light fall of dirt, his wound still fresh,

Felt his eyes closed, and heard the distant brag  
Of the last volley of humanity?

#### IV

By chance I saw him die, stretched on the ground,  
A tattooed arm lifted to take the blood  
Of someone else sealed in a tin. I stood  
During the last delirium that stays  
The intelligence a tiny moment more,  
And then the strangulation, the last sound.  
The end was sudden, like a foolish play,  
A stupid fool slamming a foolish door,  
The absurd catastrophe, half-prearranged,  
And all the decisive things still left to say.  
So we disbanded, angrier and unchanged,  
Sick with the utter silence of dispraise.

#### V

We ask for no statistics of the killed,  
For nothing political impinges on  
This single casualty, or all those gone,  
Missing or healing, sinking or dispersed,  
Hundreds of thousands counted, millions lost.  
More than an accident and less than willed  
Is every fall, and this one like the rest.  
However others calculate the cost,  
To us the final aggregate is *one*,  
One with a name, one transferred to the blest;  
And though another stoops and takes the gun,  
We cannot add the second to the first.

#### VI

I would not speak for him who could not speak  
Unless my fear were true: he was not wronged,  
He knew to which decision he belonged  
But let it choose itself. Ripe in instinct,  
Neither the victim nor the volunteer,  
He followed and the leaders could not seek  
Beyond the followers. Much of this he knew;  
The journey was a detour that would steer  
Into the Lincoln Highway of a land  
Remorselessly improved, excited, new,  
And that was what he wanted. He had planned  
To earn and drive. He and the world had winked.



## VII

No history deceived him, for he knew  
Little of times and armies not his own;  
He never felt that peace was but a loan,  
Had never questioned the idea of gain.  
Beyond the headlines once or twice he saw  
The gathering of a power by the few  
But could not tell their names; he cast his vote,  
Distrusting all the elected but not the law.  
He laughed at socialism; *on mourrait*  
*Pour les industriels?* He shed his coat  
And not for brotherhood, but for his pay.  
To him the red flag marked the sewer main.

## VIII

Above all else he loathed the homily,  
The slogan and the ad. He paid his bill  
But not for Congressmen at Bunker Hill.  
Ideals were few and those there were not made  
For conversation. He belonged to church  
But never spoke of God. The Christmas tree,  
The Easter egg, baptism, he observed,  
Never denied the preacher on his perch,  
And would not sign Resolved That or Whereas.  
Softness he had and hours and nights reserved  
For thinking, dressing, dancing to the jazz.  
His laugh was real, his manners were home made.

## IX

Of all men poverty pursued him least;  
He was ashamed of all the down and out,  
Spurned the panhandler like an uneasy doubt,  
And saw the unemployed as a vague mass  
Incapable of hunger or revolt.  
He hated other races, south or east,  
And shoved them to the margin of his mind.  
He could recall the justice of the Colt,  
Take interest in a gang-war like a game,  
His ancestry was somewhere far behind  
And left him only his peculiar name.  
Doors opened, and he recognized no class.

## X

His children would have known a heritage,  
Just or unjust, the richest in the world,  
The quantum of all art and science curled  
In the horn of plenty, bursting from the horn,  
A people bathed in honey, Paris come,  
Vienna transferred with the highest wage,  
A World's Fair spread to Phoenix, Jacksonville,  
Earth's capitol, the new Byzantium,  
Kingdom of man—who knows? Hollow or firm,  
No man can ever prophesy until  
Out of death some undiscovered germ,  
Whole toleration or pure peace is born.

## XI

The time to mourn is short that best becomes  
The military dead. We lift and fold the flag,  
Lay bare the coffin with its written tag,  
And march away. Behind, four others wait  
To lift the box, the heaviest of loads.  
The anesthetic afternoon benumbs,  
Sickens our senses, forces back our talk.  
We know that others on tomorrow's roads  
Will fall, ourselves perhaps, the man beside,  
Over the world the threatened, all who walk:  
And could we mark the grave of him who died  
We would write this beneath his name and date:

### Epitaph

Underneath this wooden cross there lies  
A Christian killed in battle. You who read,  
Remember that this stranger died in pain;  
And passing here, if you can lift your eyes  
Upon a peace kept by a human creed,  
Know that one soldier has not died in vain.

New Guinea, 1944

*Peter Viereck, 1916-*

KILROY WAS HERE

I

Also Ulysses once—that other war.  
    (Is it because we find his scrawl  
    Today on every privy door  
    That we forget his ancient role?)  
Also was there—he did it for the wages—  
When a Cathay-drunk Genoese set sail.  
*Whenever “longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,”  
Kilroy is there;  
    he tells The Miller’s Tale.*

II

At times he seems a paranoiac king  
Who stamps his crest on walls and says, “My own!”  
But in the end he fades like a lost tune,  
Tossed here and there, whom all the breezes sing.  
“Kilroy was here”; these words sound wanly gay.  
    Haughty yet tired with long marching.  
He is Orestes—guilty of what crime?—  
    For whom the Furies still are searching;  
    When they arrive, they find their prey  
(Leaving his name to mock them) went away.  
Sometimes he does not flee from them in time:  
“Kilroy was—”  
    *(with his blood a dying man  
    Wrote half the phrase out in Bataan.)*

III

Kilroy, beware. “HOME” is the final trap  
That lurks for you in many a wily shape:  
In pipe-and-slippers plus a Loyal Hound  
    Or fooling around, just fooling around.  
Kind to the old (their warm Penelope)  
But fierce to boys,  
    thus “home” becomes that sea,  
Horribly disguised, where you were always drowned,—  
    (How could suburban Crete condone  
The yarns you would have V-mailed from the sun?)—  
And folksy fishes sip Icarian tea.

*One stab of hopeless wings imprinted your  
Exultant Kilroy-signature  
Upon sheer sky for the world to stare:  
"I was there! I was there! I was there!"*

#### IV

God is like Kilroy; He, too, sees it all;  
That's how he knows of every sparrow's fall;  
That's why we prayed each time the tightropes cracked  
On which our loveliest clowns contrived their act.  
The G. I. Faustus who was

everywhere  
Strolled home again. "What was it like outside?"  
Asked Can't, with his good neighbors Ought and But  
And pale Perhaps and grave-eyed Better Not;  
For "Kilroy" means: the world is very wide.  
He was there, he was there, he was there!

*And in the suburbs Can't sat down and cried.*

Robert Lowell, 1917—

THE QUAKER GRAVEYARD  
IN NANTUCKET

(For Warren Winslow, Dead at Sea)

*Let man have dominion over the fishes  
of the sea and the fowls of the air and the  
beasts and the whole earth, and every creep-  
ing creature that moveth upon the earth.*

I

A brackish reach of shoal off Madaket,—  
The sea was still breaking violently and night  
Had steamed into our North Atlantic Fleet,  
When the drowned sailor clutched the drag-net. Light  
Flashed from his matted head and marble feet,  
He grappled at the net  
With the coiled, hurdling muscles of his thighs:  
The corpse was bloodless, a botch of reds and whites,  
Its open, staring eyes  
Were lustreless dead-lights  
Or cabin-windows on a stranded hulk  
Heavy with sand. We weight the body, close  
Its eyes and heave it seaward whence it came,  
Where the heel-headed dogfish barks its nose  
On Ahab's void and forehead; and the name  
Is blocked in yellow chalk.  
Sailors, who pitch this portent at the sea  
Where dreadnaughts shall confess  
Its hell-bent deity,  
When you are powerless  
To sand-bag this Atlantic bulwark, faced  
By the earth-shaker, green, unwearied, chaste  
In his steel scales: ask for no Orphean lute  
To pluck life back. The guns of the steeled fleet  
Recoil and then repeat  
The hoarse salute.

II

Whenever winds are moving and their breath  
Heaves at the roped-in bulwarks of this pier,

The terns and sea-gulls tremble at your death  
In these home waters. Sailor, can you hear  
The Pequod's sea wings, beating landward, fall  
Headlong and break on our Atlantic wall  
Off 'Sconset, where the yawing S-boats splash  
The bellbuoy, with ballooning spinnakers,  
As the entangled, screeching mainsheet clears  
The blocks: off Madaket, where lubbers lash  
The heavy surf and throw their long lead squids  
For blue-fish? Sea-gulls blink their heavy lids  
Seaward. The winds' wings beat upon the stones,  
Cousin, and scream for you and the claws rush  
At the sea's throat and wring it in the slush  
Of this old Quaker graveyard where the bones  
Cry out in the long night for the hurt beast  
Bobbing by Ahab's whaleboats in the East.

### III

All you recovered from Poseidon died  
With you, my cousin, and the harrowed brine  
Is fruitless on the blue beard of the god,  
Stretching beyond us to the castles in Spain,  
Nantucket's westward haven. To Cape Cod  
Guns, cradled on the tide,  
Blast the eelgrass about a waterclock  
Of bilge and backwash, roil the salt and sand  
Lashing earth's scaffold, rock  
Our warships in the hand  
Of the great God, where time's contrition blues  
Whatever it was these Quaker sailors lost  
In the mad scramble of their lives. They died  
When time was open-eyed,  
Wooden and childish; only bones abide  
There, in the nowhere, where their boats were tossed  
Sky-high, where mariners had fabled news  
Of Is, the swashing castle. What it cost  
Them is their secret. In the monster's slick  
I see the Quakers drown and hear their cry:  
"If God himself had not been on our side,  
If God himself had not been on our side,  
When the Atlantic rose against us, why,  
Then it had swallowed us up quick."

#### IV

This is the end of the whaleroad and the whale  
Who spewed Nantucket bones on the thrashed swell  
And stirred the troubled waters to whirlpools  
To send the Pequod packing off to hell:  
This is the end of them, three-quarters fools,  
Snatching at straws to sail  
Seaward and seaward on the turntail whale,  
Spouting out blood and water as it rolls,  
Sick as a dog to these Atlantic Shoals:  
*Clamavimus*, O depths. Let the sea-gulls wail

For water, for the deep where the high tide  
Mutters to its hurt self, mutters and ebbs.  
Waves wallow in their wash, go out and out,  
Leave only the death-rattle of the crabs,  
The beach increasing, its enormous snout  
Sucking the ocean's side.  
This is the end of running on the waves;  
We are poured out like water. Who will dance  
The mast-lashed master of Leviathans  
Up from this field of Quakers in their unstoned graves?

#### V

When the whale's viscera go and the roll  
Of its corruption overruns this world  
Beyond tree-swept Nantucket and Wood's Hole  
And Martha's Vineyard, Sailor, will your sword  
Whistle and fall and sink into the fat?  
In the great ash-pit of Jehoshaphat  
The bones cry for the blood of the white whale,  
The fat flukes arch and whack about its ears,  
The death-lance churns into the sanctuary, tears  
The gun-blue swingle, heaving like a flail,  
And hacks the coiling life out: it works and drags  
And rips the sperm-whale's midriff into rags,  
Gobbets of blubber spill to wind and weather,  
Sailor, and gulls go round the stoven timbers  
Where the morning stars sing out together  
And thunder shakes the white surf and dismembers  
The red flag hammered in the mast-head. Hide,  
Our steel, Jonas Messias, in Thy side.

## VI

### *Our Lady of Walsingham*

There once the penitents took off their shoes  
And then walked barefoot the remaining mile;  
And the small trees, a stream and hedgerows file  
Slowly along the munching English lane,  
Like cows to the old shrine, until you lose  
Track of your dragging pain.

The stream flows down under the druid tree,  
Shiloah's whirlpools gurgle and make glad  
The castle of God. Sailor, you were glad  
And whistled Sion by that stream. But see:

Our Lady, too small for her canopy,  
Sits near the altar. There's no comeliness  
At all or charm in that expressionless  
Face with its heavy eyelids. As before,  
This face, for centuries a memory,  
*Non est species, neque decor,*  
Expressionless, expresses God: it goes  
Past castled Sion. She knows what God knows,  
Not Calvary's Cross nor crib at Bethlehem  
Now, and the world shall come to Walsingham.

## VII

The empty winds are creaking and the oak  
Splatters and splatters on the cenotaph,  
The boughs are trembling and a gaff  
Bobs on the untimely stroke  
Of the greased wash exploding on a shoal-bell  
In the old mouth of the Atlantic. It's well;  
Atlantic, you are fouled with the blue sailors,  
Sea-monsters, upward angel, downward fish:  
Unmarried and corroding, spare of flesh  
Mart once of supercilious, wing'd clippers,  
Atlantic, where your bell-trap guts its spoil  
You could cut the brackish winds with a knife  
Here in Nantucket, and cast up the time  
When the Lord God formed man from the sea's slime  
And breathed into his face the breath of life,  
And blue-lunged combers lumbered to the kill.  
The Lord survives the rainbow of His will.



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